

HARVESTINGS:

Sketches in Prose and Verse.

BY

SYBIL HASTINGS.

"The harvest yielded and her work all done,
Basking in beauty 'neath the autumn sun."

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To

MRS. SARAH H. WHITMAN,

NEW ENGLAND'S SWEETEST POETESS,

This Volume

IS TENDERLY INSCRIBED.

P R E F A C E .

IN harvesting these buds of romance, culled during the half-gay, half-sad moments of early girlhood, the writer experiences an earnest hope that friendly glances will discern, beneath the crude and paler vestments which enfold them, the richer coloring, the softer fragrance of maturer blossoms; while in the threads drawn from the woof of many a life, which bind these fragile flowers of memory, they may find woven hope and faith in human tenderness and love divine.

In disclaiming the authorship of the Poems with which she has been permitted to embellish her little volume, the writer commends them to the favor of her friends.

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CONTENTS.

	PAGE
ROSES,	9
THE OUTCAST AND THE HEIRESS,	10
MIRANDA,	58
FLORENCE VASSAL; OR, REMINISCENCES OF MY YOUTH,	59
LOVE,	98
THE PRIMA DONNA; OR, MISTS OF THE SPIRIT,	100
TO THE ANGEL AZRAEL,	135
HEATH HALL; OR, A PACKAGE OF LETTERS,	137
ONE I MET,	193
THE SIGNET-RING; OR, FRANCOISE DE FOIX,	195
THE STATUED GATEWAY,	231
THE HOMESTEAD,	233
SPELLS OF MEMORY,	254
THE CRAYON,	256
LIGHT IN DARKNESS,	285
ANNIE RUTLIDGE; OR, REMINISCENCES OF A PIANO,	286
UNSPOKEN VOWS,	309
THREADS DRAWN FROM LIFE: AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY,	310

HARVESTINGS.

ROSES.

ONCE I brought crimson roses here,
In the bright summer hours ;
A low voice whispered, "They are dear,
These blushing, blooming flowers."

Poor roses withered long ago —
Bright summer hours gone by ;
Pallid beneath chill, wintry snow,
Forevermore they lie !

Another hand than mine has brought
Deep-tinted roses here ;
O, hush, sad heart, thy trembling thought !
"These roses, are they dear ?"

Be glad to know, that on the air
Of this enchanted room
Still glows a lustre, rich and rare,
Unshadowed by thy gloom.

THE OUTCAST AND THE HEIRESS.

“ Wandering and toiling without gain,
The slave of others’ will,
With constant care and frequent pain,
Despised, forgotten still.”

ACTON BELL.

“ Her face is smiling, and her voice is sweet ;
But smiles betray, and music sings deceit.”

HOOD.

“ The measure thou to her didst mete
To thee shall measured be.”

“ Hot cakes ! hot cakes ! Here’s your nice hot cakes ! ” wailed forth a faint, child-like voice, just before the entrance of one of Broadway’s saloons of palatial splendor. The child had been out all day ; from seven in the morning until night-fall, she had dragged those worn and weary feet over the icy pavements. Frightened by the day’s ill success, she had gone back to the miserable cellar from whence she received her supply of cakes, to hear herself reviled by every opprobrious name ; and now, weary, disheartened, she was again abroad in the early evening,— the dark and cheerless evening ; to her made doubly dark and cheerless, by the luxury and beauty revealed by the mocking lights of the brilliantly illumined windows.

Colder than the day had fallen the winter night, and more hopeless had grown the heart of the weary child. “ Hot cakes ! hot cakes ! ” she shouted to the passers-by ; but who would

hearken to her cry, when the sharp night wind caused stout men to turn aside from its icy blast ?

Through the glittering plate-glass poured the glare of the gas-lights over the cold curb-stone upon which sat the emaciated figure of the shivering child. The corner of a scanty shawl, serving for a hood, left the face utterly unprotected from the cold. It was a strange, dark little face, with its expression of premature age stamped thereon by suffering, and widely at variance with the dwarfed and reed-like figure. The small feet had ceased to ache ; they had become stiff and numb ; they could scarcely support her when she essayed to walk.

The saloon before which she had paused was filled with visitors, for it was Christmas eve. Children were flitting about in gay dresses, their eyes sparkling with gratified desire, their cheeks crimson with health and happiness ; and there were many older persons present, looking tenderly upon them, and smiling benignantly upon their pleading, expectant ways, as they gathered about the costly trifles, the rare *bijouterie* of the holidays.

Looking in at these gay children of loving care and affluent prosperity, the expression of the girl's eyes, at first dull and listless, gradually changed. Large, dark and lustreless, they had been ; but, as a wild, uncontrollable longing after a share in all that joy and beauty, shut out from her by what seemed but a frail, transparent barrier of plate-glass, took possession of the little outcast of life, those eyes were no longer lustreless, — the soul, hungering after the beautiful yet more than the starved body for nourishment, was looking forth with a pitiful desire. You could read it in the hurried breathing, in the forgetfulness which suffered that apology for a bonnet to fall back from the matted, tangled locks she had sought to cover. But no human being could have divined the insane, increasing impulse within her, which went quivering to the very finger-ends of that soiled, skeleton

hand, upraised with a wild, passionate desire to smite that fragile barrier rising between her misery and that prodigal luxury.

Just at the moment when that almost frantic hand raised itself to the storm of passion within her breast, a carriage came dashing along so close to her side that she could feel the hot breath gushing from the nostrils of the prancing horses as they were drawn up. From the carriage there bounded the figure of a fairy, with a merry, childish laugh, accompanied by a gentleman, young and of graceful presence. She carried a little basket on her arm, and the falling out of several parcels with her rapid movements had caused the gay laugh; and as her companion gathered them up, half hidden as she was in cloaks and furs, the beauty of the girl was not obscured. The wind swept back the white feathers wreathing the small satin hat, and with them a cloud of golden curls. With the step of a Peri she glided over the pavement and into the saloon.

The glass door closed upon her, but she still remained visible to the eyes that followed her. With tender assiduity the gentleman unclasped the fur cloak which she wore, and from spot to spot, from object to object, fluttered the brilliant figure, while parcel after parcel was added to the basket, and again and again a small crimson purse produced, from which a glittering coin was forthcoming. To the eyes which regarded her with an interest so mournful, its contents appeared inexhaustible. But at length an earnest, eager hope came throbbing into being within her breast. She was cold, weary, hungry, — what if she should offer her cakes to that little fairy, who, with her inexhaustible wealth, purchased so much? for, even if she should not hearken to her despair, with harsh words and rough hands she would not put her aside. Close, close to the lighted entrance she pressed her poor, frozen body, — on came the brilliant apparition, until in its contact the outcast experienced something like the

sensation she would have felt had the radiance of a summer's sun shone suddenly upon her wintry way.

"Hot cakes! hot cakes! O, please buy my hot cakes, I am so tired — so cold!" and the trembling voice sank into a sob, as the large, wondering eyes looked into her own.

"What makes you come out, if you are tired, little girl? Why don't you stay at home and keep warm?" demanded an imperious though musical voice.

"Margery's got no home; Margery will never be warm again!" moaned the child.

"What, don't you live nowhere, little Margery?" questioned a softer voice than had first addressed her, its imperiousness quite gone.

With her hand Margery pointed first up and then down Broadway.

"Live in the street! Live in the street! Cousin Mark, she don't, does she?"

"Not literally," answered the gentleman, who had been listening with an amused air to the colloquy between the two; "she would have you understand she is out most of the time at her trade of begging and vagrancy. But it is too cold for you to stand here chatting any longer, Rosa, love; jump into the carriage, quick, — yes, I will give her something;" and drawing out a quarter of a dollar, he placed it in Margery's hand, saying, "Take it, you little vagabond, and off with you! It is too cold to hear any more."

But the poor numb fingers closed not on it greedily, as he had anticipated. She held it to him who gave it; speaking in trembling, angry tones, "Margery an't a vagabond; she asked you to buy her cakes."

"Faith, you are one, though!" was the annoyed rejoinder; and with passionate vehemence the child threw the money down ringing on the pavement, and passed on.

As she did so, again a laugh smote upon her ear, but it was not the gay laugh of childhood. From the lips of pros-

perous, vigorous manhood it burst, mocking at the human pride swelling even in the heart of the starving wanderer.

"Margery! Margery!" Twice she heard herself called upon, but heeded it not, as she stepped forward, languid, drooping beneath her burden. "Margery!" It came again, in more earnest tones, and she paused to look back.

The child was bending from the carriage window, the light falling full upon her. She beheld again the golden curls, the crimson cheeks, the blue and smiling eyes; and they won her swiftly back. Standing on tip-toe upon the curbstone, in close contact with the child, she listened to her words.

"He has gone back into the saloon. I sent him, for I want to tell you, little Margery, that I don't like it in him; he is cross; you ar' n't a vagabond. I am sorry about you, little girl, and I'll tell mamma how cold you was, and that I gave you this to keep you warm."

As she spoke, she dropped her velvet mantle, lined and edged with costly furs, by Margery's side. In the sudden bewilderment of the moment, the poor girl beheld the gentleman spring across the walk into the carriage, the carriage driven off, and, with the rich, warm mantle falling upon her arm, caught only the echo of Rosa's voice, who, bending from the window, bade her "expect her again some sunny morning on Broadway."

With a hand in its condition strangely at variance with the fabric which it touched, she gathered about her the mantle which had fallen warm as a sunbeam upon her, and glided on.

"Hot cakes!" rang out almost cheerily now upon the frosty air, and more than one passer-by paused to look back upon the strange apparition which crossed their path.

"Please buy my cakes!" She had moved but a few rods from where the carriage had driven off, when a hand which arrested her progress caused her to look up. Over those tattered habiliments, that uncovered head, and on the glistening, warm-hued velvet, fell the light; but the eager, hopeful

expression changed to one of anxious uncertainty, for her glance rested upon the star shining conspicuous on a policeman's breast.

A little way off he had perceived her stooping to the pavement for the mantle which had fallen from the carriage window. Those Argus-eyes marked her envelop herself in its costly folds; and futile were her tears, vain her explanation. Who would hearken to the incredible assertion that the mantle had been given to her? Poor Margery slept that night in the watch-house; but the rough and brutal voices surrounding her disturbed her not when the first pang of terror subsided into apathy, for they were not new to her. Long had they mingled with her dreams as she lay upon the pile of shavings in the darkest corner of that miserable cellar which she called her home. Sleeping, her dreams bore her back to a period more remote; a period between the recollection of which and the present there lay such dense clouds of misery, as to shut out from memory, but in chance dreams or hours of wandering thought, all remembrance of its blessed peace. Once more the song of the robin, which, from its perch on the blossoming thorn, shook the white and silver buds to the green sward before their cottage door, mingled with her mother's lullaby to herself cradled upon her breast. Once again the winter fire hummed to itself its pleasant tune upon the hearth, as, seated upon a father's knee, she listened to those wondrous tales, always fresh-coined for his child's ear, out of the interest of love in the hour's gay mood.

Again, — but now a cloud sweeps heavily over the vision of other days, and Margery moans aloud in her dreaming woe. Mamma, cold as ice to the lips which fall upon her cheek, sleeps on, silent to the entreaty which bids her wake; and then a little, only a little while, and a stouter figure fills the place once occupied by the departed shadowy one. Louder tones harshly rebuke all childish foibles, and papa's red cheek grows redder with those words. Often now his step, once so

firm and free, wavers on the threshold with a nameless weakness which she cannot comprehend, looking on his red cheek and burning eyes. Darker, darker yet the vision, — the old hearth gives way to a strange, unquiet home in the great city's stormy heart, and with a yet more bitter cry Margery awakes.

The moonlight, shining through the barred and dingy windows about her, has lost its cold and stony hue in the sun's clear and cheering radiance; but she heeds it not; her mouth is parched; the fever complaint of "Water! O, give me water to drink!" is on her lips.

With the memory of that dream still throbbing at her heart, she stood arraigned before a court of magistrates, and in that imperious presence which revealed itself as the father of the sunny-haired Rosa beheld a claimant of that unfortunate gift, in the beautiful folds of which lurked a treacherous accusation of herself. With her brain reeling in the incipient delirium of severe illness, and trembling beneath the glance of august rebuke bent upon her, she responded not to the accusation which so cruelly maligned her innocence. With strange, mute apathy she asked herself, when the sentence of many months' imprisonment was communicated to her, if it implied any deeper misery than she had already experienced; and over that dark, hopeless face there rained no tears, there flitted no expression of sorrow. With every limb racked with acute pain, and deadly contagion in her hot and hurried breathing, she was taken away.

Beneath the falling curtains of coarse green serge the beams of a New Year's sun drank in the last breath of the dead year, frozen into silver upon the window-panes, when, for the first time, Margery's eyes unclosed, and wandered, in dawning consciousness, around the sick ward to which she had been taken. Even the skeleton fingers, resting helpless upon her breast, were still of the same deep scarlet hue which burnt in a fiery flush upon her face; but the crisis had past, — the violence of the disease had abated. The scarred and

crimson skin was but the mark of the insidious disease which had stolen into her veins, and drank deep of the fountains of life and vigor.

By the sick one's side stood a black-robed figure, with the serene, pale face of a Sister of Charity, looking out from beneath the close white cap. By her the soiled and tattered habiliments had been exchanged for those of comfort and cleanliness, — the tangled hair close shaven. Day and night she had watched beside her, — watchful in her care, and tender in her ways, as a mother with her child. Had age discolored the soft brown hair, dimmed the eyes' lustre? Lay there in that heart a dull, aching void, in the place of perished joy? From bitter, haunting phantoms of the past sought she oblivion in fatiguing duties, fearless of the risk of loathsome disease? Had life's sun set? No, — not a shadow veiled its brightness; warm and fruitful of good deeds, it shone upon her heart in its meridian radiance, nourishing a high and holy faith, — mercy and charity to all mankind.

Young and fair, but no longer gay with the first exuberant life of youth, that shadowy form flitted through the city's byways, its crowded courts, reeking with pollution and misery; along the hospital corridors, to the weary beds of the suffering and the lonely, bearing hope and comfort with its presence.

“Drink, my child!” — it was the same quiet voice which had lately sounded in her delirium; and though the parched and quivering lips had not strength to give utterance to the first perplexity of returning consciousness, they closed in meek and grateful obedience over the draught held to her mouth. Gently she felt herself raised, the pillow shaken, the crushed linen smoothed about her, and then the quiet tones bade her sleep. “Sleep, little one, sleep and rest! I will watch beside thee.”

But the wandering eyes of Margery dozed not, until grad-

ually the soft light of her nurse's eyes became magnetic in their influence, and she slept that silent, dreamless sleep, bringing balm and healing in its waking.

The broken, half-incoherent sentences which had fallen from Margery's lips during her illness had awoke in the sister's heart vague surmises of the existence of a purer, more intelligent inner life in the young prisoner than is usually found in one whose vagabond habits, the result of untutored poverty, had brought her, whether through strict or mistaken justice, to where she had found her. The expression of profound gratitude, even in that brief interlude of consciousness, shining from the child's eyes, added unconsciously to the duty of her profession, which enjoined upon her to withdraw from temptation and degradation, to the utmost of her ability, whosoever stood endangered. During the hours of that winter day, as she watched beside the child, the morning's desire ripened into a determination to spread the blessing of her protection over her, on her release from the confinement to which she had been subjected,—a determination which Margery's despair, on the necessary cessation of her visits, enforced.

In one of the most fashionable portions of the city of New York stood the house which Rosa Evans called "papa's." Its proportions alone sufficed to speak it the home of affluence ; but it was rich in its architectural adornments, and its balconies of carved and fretted stone-work looked out upon a garden, the length and breadth of which alone were a fortune to the denizen of that land-pressed metropolis. That whole garden was affluent, from the beds rich in the florist's skill at a more genial season, to the cold, still mementos of more than one fruitful dream, dreamed in a foreign atelier. Bank, flower and statue, however, were alike snow-clad, ice-circled, by the winter's rigor. Even a wing of the conservatory was shrouded, with all the windows of the house,

by blind and curtain ; not the faintest ray of the brilliant morning sun was suffered to penetrate to the interior. But all these closed avenues of light guarded neither the dreariness of empty rooms or the shadow of a great sorrow.

A delicious, intoxicating draught of pleasure was quaffed within by youthful lips. Rays of amethyst light, streaming from golden chandeliers, vibrating to one of Strauss' waltzes, mocked the sunlight of the heavens without.

Looking in upon the crowd, moving in butterfly plumage to the melody which stirred the fragrance from the flowers, and awoke a more than natural exhilaration of life, you would have fancied yourself in fairy-land, so diminutive was that graceful throng, so unlike the freshness and vivacity of those before you to the usual appearance of *habitués* of the ball-room.

It was a morning ball, — a child's fête, — given in honor of the heiress Rosa Evans' twelfth birth-day. Everything had been done to give brilliancy to the affair, — to give joy to Rosa ; but life's first tangible sorrow lay heavy at her heart. She had been tempted to wrong, and had yielded to the tempter. Urged to falsehood, she had for the first time stained the purity of those childish lips, that she might shield from undue censure a deed springing out of the generous impulse of an affectionate heart, rather than the lips best loved, and consequently most feared, should chide in cold words. Owning no authority but that of her father, and habituated from long permission to indulge in the moment's impulse, she had not scrupled to cast over the shivering shoulders of the outcast her own costly mantle, for the first time worn that day. But the representation of her maid, Lizzie, who had suffered Rosa to go out without her, contrary to her instructions, placed the subject before the young heiress in an altogether different light.

"What, Mr. Evans' present ! Papa's own beautiful, generous gift, thrown away on a ragged beggar ! O, Miss Rosa ! how could you be so ungrateful !" and the maid's voice and

expression depicted far more consternation than she, in truth, experienced ; for Miss Rosa, in annoyance at her rebuke, was about to defend her act. “ O, Miss Rosa, darling, what will I do ? If I had not let you had your own way, and gone out with Mr. Mark, they could not have been angry with me ; but now poor Lizzie will be sent away from her darling young lady, and without anywhere to put her head ! ” and she pretended to fall to sobbing and weeping bitterly, well knowing the girl’s heart was never proof against tears.

Rosa yielded, and Lizzie told her mamma that very night, in the presence of Mr. Evans, that Rosa’s cloak had been taken from the carriage, where it had been left on their entering the saloon.

Mark Allan was then absent, or possibly his knowledge might have thrown more light upon the transaction ; but he was not present, and Margery’s doom was sealed.

Rosa had entered the breakfast-room, the following morning, just as the lost mantle had been brought in from the police-office, where it had been sought a half-hour previous, and claimed by Mr. Evans. She beheld the beautiful, glistening folds shaken out ; and a deeper color was upon her cheek than ever flushed it before, as she turned to the bird-cage swinging in the recess of the window, and fed its occupant with a handful of crumbs. She heard her father enter the room behind her, but she had not the courage to look up ; and then she heard that grave, serious voice speaking sternly of the increase of crime and vagrancy in the city. But, as he continued, all at once the color faded from Rosa’s cheek ; above the loud singing of the bird she had heard the repetition of Margery’s sentence. With the exclamation of “ O, papa, papa, Margery did not steal it ! ” rising to her lips, she was turning to her father, when Mark Allan entered the room, and for a moment she hesitated.

Mr. Evans entered into conversation with him concerning other and important matters, and Rosa stood waiting until it

should be terminated, and her voice should gain strength to address him ; but, instead of adding to her courage, time was rapidly subduing the first honest impulse ; faster and faster ebbed into her heart irresolution and fear ; until, strive as she would, from her lips there came no sound. Again and again remorse for the wrong she had done, in the absence of her father, led her to ardently desire to make to him her confession and her atonement ; but always on the face of that still, reserved man, when he turned towards his child, was there so strong an expression of exultant pride, so little of winning tenderness of manner, which can alone secure a child's confidence, that she could not bring herself to say, " Papa, the poor beggar-girl, whom you are so harsh with, is innocent ; it is your own child who has deceived you." And thus no passing joy, no holiday fête, could illumine that dark plague-spot of memory gnawing remorsefully at her heart.

Rosa had been dancing with Mark Allan, and, weary with the morning's exertions, stood leaning against the damask drapery, which, loosened from its confinement, swept fold on fold over the entrance to the conservatory. The slight, childish figure, in its white dress, covered with bright, warm buds and flowers, drooped languidly, and the young cheek burnt with a crimson so deep, that Mark Allan, looking upon her beauty rapturously with his artist eyes, said to her,

" Ma belle Rosa Evans shall dance no more, or she will be ill, and we shall have no more birth-day fêtes permitted us."

" It won't make any difference to you, Cousin Mark, when you are away," answered the girl, sorrowfully, looking up with the brilliancy of those blue eyes dimmed by gathering tears. The next moment she gave a quick glance around, to see if any one had observed her, and darted beneath the curtain.

Mark followed her so quickly, so noiselessly, that he had time to perceive her put up one hand with a motion of despairing sorrow, before she was aware that he had joined her.

Through his reserve of manner, through the worldliness life had already crusted over the young man's heart, broke a deep, genuine emotion of pleasure. He caught the hand of Rosa as it fell, and the dimmed blue eyes looking up to his beheld them flashing a joyousness which she had never recognized before.

"Does my little cousin, then, so grieve that I am going away? And does she really think that it will matter not to me whether life be to her dark or bright? Keep it pure and bright, for my sake, little Rosa; and when your cousin comes back, some future birth-day, he will show you how very much he does care."

There was such an earnest music to Rosa's ear in the voice which addressed her, that it awoke at once the affectionate heart of the child. She had a vague idea of confiding her regret and its poignancy to her cousin; but not now, when he had just bade her keep her life so pure and true, and was going away before time could prove to him how sincere she was. No, O, no, she could not!

She looked up to meet his proffered kiss, and she knew it was a more loving caress than he had ever before given her.

In that passing moment Mark Allan formed a resolve which he believed would be imperishable. It is true that it had had a vague form in his mind for months; that again and again he had pictured to himself a remote vision of a time when just such a sweet presence should endear his future life. It would be his desire, and therefore attainable; for Mark Allan rarely confessed himself disappointed. He did not pause to question himself, "Am I worthy of such as she? Shall I be worthy years hence, when time has added yet more temptation to a life which never yet has fought the hard battle between self and duty?" No; the childish love which he believed filled his young companion's heart with passionate sorrow at his departure should give itself in its maturer power, its woman's beauty, to him.

The thought of Rosa as the heiress of all Mr. Evans' great wealth was but secondary with him then. He imagined her in her beauty welcoming his return; the glow neither fluctuating or fading then, as now, in fragile childhood, but blossomed into the loveliness of perfect womanhood.

He placed a spray of white rose-buds amid her golden curls, and as he did so said,

"When I come home, *ma belle*, they shall be orange-flowers, and fairy Rosa Evans shall take Mark Allan for her knight."

Rosa's laugh mingled with his, and it was care-free and unconstrained, as though his words possessed no power to echo back upon her heart in after days.

That afternoon Mark Allan sailed for England, for a long absence abroad. In the Aiden of an artist's dream he was to dwell, until from the grand old paintings in crumbling palaces and dim cathedrals he should have read those lessons of canvas lore, which were to enrich his own visions of beauty and ambition.

With the flowers drooping in her hair, and her rich dress crushed beneath her, lay Rosa upon the *fauteuil* within her mother's dressing-room, where she had thrown herself, weeping, with Mark's last "good-by." Worn out with excitement, she slept; a feverish glow had dried her wet cheeks, and the breath came rapid and uneven from her lips; but yet she slept on, while the firelight played with the dusk and creeping shadows of the evening-fall.

Once or twice Lizzie, the flippant, artful nursery-maid, to whom Mrs. Evans resigned the charge of her child, went in and out of the room. Only too glad to be relieved from her attendance, she permitted the child to rest there undisturbed, while the fever, which had been quickening all day in her veins, burnt higher and higher.

The maid heard the rising of the family from dinner, and stole hastily from a *tête-à-tête* with the footman in the hall.

She had just time to rouse Rosa when the turning on of the gas in the brackets before the dressing-table filled the room with light. The child, half awakened, saw only her mother, in evening costume, standing before the mirror, twisting some ornaments in her hair; the next moment she was hurried to her own apartment.

"I wish mamma would come to me; I want to see mamma before I go to bed, my head aches so badly, Lizzie!" she begged.

Her hand held her head, as in pain, and she stood upon the soft rug, in her long white night-dress, shivering before the fire, though her cheeks were burning, and her hands hot.

"No, no, Miss Rosa; don't think I am going bothering your mamma, when she is going out, because you choose to fancy yourself ill; you are only tired of dancing, and so are we all, dancing attendance on you to-day. Go to bed, that's a good girl, — come!"

More obedient and docile, from illness, than was her wont, Rosa obeyed, and the girl sat down by the fire; but when Rosa, after tossing restlessly, fell asleep, Lizzie at once arose and went out, closing the door after her.

"Mamma! mamma!"

Moaned in pain and despair, that cry went echoing through those luxurious chambers, but no answer came to soothe it to rest. It fell on the echoing silence of the mother's distant chamber. There was the firelight, the great toilet-mirror, reflecting back the jewels in the unclosed casket beneath, and all the glistening appurtenances of a costly toilet; but the dressing-gown lay upon the easy-chair before the fire, the room was tenantless, the mother was shining in her loveliness and rich attire in some brilliant drawing-room; had she been within hearing, her blood would have chilled to the wildness of that cry. In the basement the servants held their revel and their liberty; — they heard it not.

The night-key of the master of the house admitted him.

Louder and shriller came the voice, echoing down the stairway. With a step fleet as in boyhood, he bounded forward in its direction. Now moaning, now shrieking wildly for her mother, lay his child there alone, mad with fever, deserted, stifling in the heated atmosphere, weird thoughts and phantom fancies pressing upon her brain.

When Mrs. Evans returned, her child knew her not. She found the family physician with her, and there was an unusually thoughtful expression upon his countenance.

The morrow's sun saw the house closed, as the day previous; but no gay children were tripping to gushing music in the rooms below. Silence and fear reigned in its stead, for there was deadly contagion in that presence which had then imparted pleasure to all.

Ignorant of the duties of a sick room, trembling at the danger by herself incurred, but not wholly willing to yield that semblance of the affection which she believed that she possessed for her child, Mrs. Evans vacillated between the sick room and her own, until her husband, perceiving the little benefit Rosa derived from her presence, advised her to leave her entirely to the care of the nurse. But he himself remained by her side, and in the shadow of the angel of death, whose presence all knew was near at hand, listened to the unconscious voice solving the mystery of a grief too profound to have been caused by Mark Allan's departure.

"Margery! Margery!" moaned Rosa, so sorrowfully and remorsefully, with such a wail of despair, that he knew her days of consciousness had been burdened by a woe he could not divine. But how chanced it that that woe had fallen on her, the child of his love, the beautiful recipient of his care, and he in ignorance of it? Soon, however, the low-moaned "Margery!" with the sorrowful and but half-coherent self-accusations, revealed to him the truth. But, alas that in the place of that regret, which should have filled his whole soul with keenest pain, a coward fear and terror of his sever-

ity should have so crept up between himself and his child's confidence as to render her oblivious to truth and duty!—alas! I say, that in its place awoke only a sentiment of humiliation that a child of his should have feared to do right; that anything belonging to him should have so far deviated from the pride, not from the purity, of integrity! In a storm of injured dignity he went forth from the sick room with stern and bitter words to drive from his roof the ignorant minister to Rosa's weakness; but the ebbing, faint and low, of the vigor of that idol's life, led him back with despair at his heart, and a frenzied prayer to heaven for her life.

Day after day hope lay but a feather's weight in the scale of life against despair; but imperceptibly it grew, until they realized life again was quickening in those languid limbs. But the mother's words of thoughtless regret, in the very dawn of that heaven-petitioned life, told her child how poor a boon she considered the answer to their prayer, granted as it was with its outer glory dimmed.

Rosa Evans lived, but the disease growing out of the contagion of the wronged outcast's presence had clasped with a more death-like grasp the inmate of the palace than of the prison. Rosa lived, but with the roses forever blanched upon her cheek, and a cloud veiling her beauty.

Restitution the rich man would have made the condemned Margery from the abundance of his purse; but, shunning exposure of his child's honor, he waited for the expiration of her confinement and her release to liberty. But when the summer's affluence of flowers and autumn's golden days had been garnered into the treasury of bold December, and the weary prisoner's heart resigned itself to the passing away of those genial days which nature gave even to the child of poverty; and the time for which Mr. Evans waited came slowly round to her who also waited, but not as he had done; he found the day of atonement had been too long deferred, — Margery had disappeared, and the memory of his injustice

nestled down in an obscure corner of that arrogant heart, to ripen in after time.

CHAPTER II.

“With stern right hand it stretches forth a scroll,
Wherein she reads, in melancholy letters,
The cruel, fatal fact, that placed her soul
And her young heart in fetters.”

Some six or seven years subsequent to the events recorded in the preceding chapter, seated alone in her chamber, Rosa Evans threw off the restraint which she had imposed upon herself during the day, and yielded to that same abandonment to every passing emotion which had characterized her childhood.

A letter had that day been received from Mark Allan, for the first time announcing his return. Time, in its lapse, had not alienated from Rosa the recollection of the wanderer. In the constant intercourse which he had maintained by letter with the family of his guardian, the child who had loved, and been loved by him in return, in his boyhood's home, had evidently not been forgotten in the artist's dream of ambition, manhood's hours of pleasure.

To Rosa he had been suffered unchecked to address letters, which, if not those of an avowed lover, were intelligible as such to her; and, like a star in her breast, waxing brighter with the dawn of early womanhood, gleamed his memory with her. But within the last year his letters had become briefer; there were no more glowing dreams, in which Rosa recognized herself as the actual of his ideal; and finally they ceased altogether, while Rosa blushed and wept in secret over the gradual dissipation of those hopes which almost unconsciously she had suffered to spring into being. Now, however, the long-delayed letter came, and its contents

were of her. He had been ill, and the languor attendant on convalescence had led him to defer writing; but now he spoke of home, and a yearning for old, familiar faces, which had fallen with a power irresistible upon him. Again and again Rosa read: "The memory of a pair of sunny eyes has kept warm in my heart the thoughts of an American home, and I long to renew my acquaintance with their glances; for the restraint growing out of time and absence has so estranged my friend Rosa, that I can scarce discern a trace in this package of exquisitely-worded letters which lies before me of the gay, frank child with whom I parted long years ago."

He knew not then the shadow which had fallen on that radiant face. No, — with the same coward weakness which had not suffered her to say to her father "I gave it to poor Margery," Rosa shrank from divesting Mark Allan of the memory of that haunting, childish beauty to which he clung. But now, with a cold chill of regret that she had not undeceived him, and for that destiny which she had been taught to mourn and succumb to, rather than surmount, she knew that he was coming back to behold the realization of that womanhood which he had pictured.

From the portrait of that face which Mark had hung upon the wall of her mother's room before he left them, forever mocking with its brilliant coloring the pale shadow of what had once been its rival, she had often beheld that mother turn dissatisfied and regretful; — would it not also be thus with him?

Greatly had Mrs. Evans prided herself in her child's inheritance of beauty; for in the regularity of those features, and the brilliancy of that complexion, she recognized attractions which had secured for herself the position, which, as the wife of a millionaire, she occupied in the fashionable world, — the only world she recognized.

It had been nothing to her that that husband was twice her

years, that between them there was nothing of similarity or congeniality of feeling. If affection had been named in that barter of youth and loveliness for age and wealth, it was but a mere desecration of its truth with an unmeaning form. To the woman it was a word of foreign import in the lesson of her life, and in the heart of the man it lay in dead letters beneath the dust of worldliness.

If in some moment of *ennui* to Mrs. Evans' heart there came a passing query, as to what the finale of that life should be, when time had dimmed her eyes' light and her cheeks' bloom, and void and shadow lay alone in the place of love and peace, she would hush the questioning voice in the sinful prayer, "Let me then die!"

And Rosa Evans grew up listening to the ever-recurring moan over her misfortune, until life, health and fortune, seemed to her as dross in comparison with that which had been taken from her. No more, after that dreadful illness, did mamma gaze upon her with exultant eyes, as she listened to the loudly expressed admiration of her guests over her red cheeks; and — harder yet to the clinging, craving heart of childhood — as she lingered by her side, longing after the old caressing manner, but too proud to make it known, no more did Mrs. Evans smooth her curls, calling her "fairy Rosa," and her "darling pet."

But with Mr. Evans it was not so. Perhaps in his growing age life seemed arid without that human love which, through the days of his self-sufficient manhood, he sought not nor wooed to his heart. In wide contradiction to that sentiment which gave his name to her mother, he took his child to his heart more closely than before. They thought that in age he was losing that imperious desire that all things appertaining to him should shine and dazzle that world, which to him, equally with his wife, was a most despotic sovereign; but it was not so. That which had shattered the mother's ambitious hopes for her daughter, and alienated so much

tenderness, he too had sorrowed for ; but it showed itself in a different way. Into Rosa's heart he sought to instil a pride of her position, as the heiress of his wealth, which should cover from her own eyes the wound to her vanity. He gave her, even in girlhood, unlimited command over his purse, and gratified her every whim. Always through life he remembered that Rosa had once feared to offend him, and in that fear of his severity had well-nigh died with remorse and anguish at her heart ; and most strenuously he sought to convince her how grievous had been the wrong which she had done to his affection.

If but half those endeavors had been used to teach his child how dangerous to her purity and peace of mind had been that deviation from truth, out of which sprang a result so grievous to the unhappy Margery and her future happiness, that affection might have blessed Rosa Evans' life from its years of childhood into serene old age.

In society, Rosa Evans was the petted heiress, the haughty, wayward child of affluence, graceful in person and manners, apparently knowing no sorrow, enduring no care. But, withdrawn from all eyes, the untutored impulses, the uncontrolled passions, gave way to every emotion which desire created.

Marriage, which to Mrs. Evans signified little more than an establishment, with liberty to indulge in every capricious whim, and involving the excitement and gayeties consequent upon a bridal, was to her a most desirable consummation of Rosa's girlhood. Some one would, of course, ere long, marry her daughter for the fortune which Mr. Evans would give his only child ; and the remembrance of Mark Allan's fancy for Rosa revived, with the sudden announcement of his intention to return, her old promise, given partly in jest and partly in earnest, that her daughter should at some future day become his wife. Mark had always been with her a favorite. The profound admiration which her beauty awoke in the breast of her husband's ward—a mere boy when she became Mrs.

Evans — was repaid by herself by every indulgence in her power.

Possibly there was more congeniality between the handsome and matured young student, who made their house his home during the holidays, and the girlish, volatile belle, than between herself and her husband; certainly there was far more similarity of age. However it might have been, that favor of which Mrs. Evans was most prodigal brought Mark Allan, in the very onset of life, the intoxicating charm of that luxurious life, which his own small means apparently opened not to him. To the brilliant saloons in which she ever shone conspicuous she carried him with her. Pleased by the eager delight which she awoke, and dazzled by the glitter of society, he was blind then to the void of that home life, the barrenness of that fireside.

When Mr. Evans would have pressed upon him the necessity of entering either upon a professional or mercantile life, so earnestly did his wife combat that advice, and claim indulgence for the desire which Mark craved, but which his guardian deemed neither wise nor prudent, that she finally succeeded; and, with his entire fortune in his purse, Mark Allan went to Europe, to work out those early dreams of youth to which a life of luxury had given a deeper tone. And Mrs. Evans had not been disappointed; year after year there came more enthusiastic accounts of the young artist's success.

For a season Mark Allan had cast off, as a cumbrous garment, which fettered his genius, the indulgence which had enervated him; with an insatiate desire to win himself a position amid the world's little circle of favored ones, he wrought out, of what were in truth the elements of genius, much of beauty.

But a voice floating through his studio at Naples, from a neighboring conservatoire, entranced him with its melody. Day after day, at a certain hour, as the pupil of the con-

servatoire went through her role, he threw aside his pencil and yielded himself to its witchery. Soon, from the group of idlers who always congregated in the vicinity to share the same enjoyment, he learned that it was Signora Beatrice whose voice awoke so much enthusiasm ; and ere long, kneeling in the cathedral, she was pointed out to him, with her head bowed and her hands crossed in Catholic devotion on her breast. A little while, and the American artist had a new sitter ; but day after day those sittings were prolonged,—prolonged until the dark splendor of Beatrice's eyes looked out from beneath the brow of every beautiful ideal creation of woman's face upon his canvas,—until the liquid, silvery tones, rising scarce above a whisper, said, firmly, “ Adieu, Signor, forever ! ” and the delicious notes which had so stirred his imagination no more after that day thrilled his ear.

Then his farewell to Italy was spoken. Naples lay behind him.

Mark's poverty was no objection, as affairs stood, with Mrs. Evans. He was coming back rich in fame ; his celebrity would add *éclat* to their wealth. And with more interest than she had ever dreamed of manifesting in her child's welfare, she superintended the arrangement of Rosa's toilet. Mark had arrived, as she had hoped, the day preceding the evening's brilliant party.

Rosa Evans thoroughly comprehended the arrangement which prevented her going down to welcome their guest, in the brief space which intervened between the morning's unadorned costume and the airy dress which would display the graceful form, the evening's excitement which would tinge with color her pale cheek.

And Mark Allan met her in the lighted drawing-room, with her golden hair braided into more than its olden beauty about the perfect contour of that head which he had bound with budding roses. But he at once perceived the shadow which had fallen there, and which that dazzling toilet would fain

have screened. Coward heart, worldly weakness, he at once read in Rosa Evans' eye; and, with something very like a sigh of relief, he said to himself, "She has made only another woman of fashion!" With this conclusion, he banished from his heart all regret for the wrong which he had determined to do that human heart.

A continent lay between himself and the woman whom he loved; between himself and the honorable indulgence of that love, lay a waste more than world wide, — poverty and self-sacrifice. To the demon of self, which had grown into a god within his breast, there was no sacrifice too costly; and the very low and very firm voice had bade him "adieu forever."

"When Mark Allan returns, he will tell you, little Rosa, how very much he does care whether your life be bright or otherwise."

The voice of his young bride, tremulous with feeling, recalling to him these almost forgotten words in their bridal home, startled the ear upon which it fell.

And that time has now come, Mark, she continued, softly, for the first time, in her emotion, casting aside that reserve and shyness which he had mistaken for a want of deep feeling; and, looking upon those brightening eyes, that earnest countenance, he read a tenderness for which the simple courtesy of manner which he had intended to manifest towards her would never suffice.

He strove to answer kindly those loving tones, but the spirit which he knew went not with them made them cold and hollow to himself. Even then, they chilled Rosa to silence; but no doubt of his sincerity came over her.

CHAPTER III.

“I might have known what fruit would spring from such a seed.”

BYRON.

The fragrance was not all gone from Rosa's bridal bouquet before the gushing love of a heart peculiarly sensitive had been insensibly taught to repress any passionate demonstration of its tenderness; before the bride had been taught that over that heart, which she had vainly dreamed her own, there fell a frequent sombre cloud, which the light of her smile might never seek to dissipate. But it gave her only a momentary pang, a passing disappointment; for in society her husband was all that the most craving heart could desire; and they were in society almost constantly during the gayeties subsequent to their bridal.

Gradually, however, as the excitement of that gay bridal passed away, and his wife's demands upon his affection became more earnest, Mark Allan roused himself with an icy heartlessness no one looking upon him could have believed he possessed, to chill Rosa's petulant, sorrowing heart to silence.

One day he bade her remember that, in becoming a wife, she had voluntarily resigned all girlish affectation and weakness to,—but Rosa broke in upon his words sorrowfully, reproachfully.

“Affectation, Mark!”

“Ay,” he answered, irritated by a cause of which his companion was then ignorant; “are you always so very truthful as to be indignant at the term, Mrs. Allan?”

Rosa's very brow flushed, as he spoke, with so deep a color as to be painful in its intensity, and at once she left his side.

She did not know that Mark was flushed with an unnatural excitement; that the champagne which, dancing in his glass at

dinner, had been of late too freely taken, had robbed his words of courtesy even to her; but it was so. There were haunting memories in his brain, from which there was no escape but in the blinding cup.

From that day she never again sought to win him by either conciliating attention or reproachful word. "He has no faith in me," she whispered to herself, sadly; "he loves me not, as I have believed;" but, too proud to call attention to her grief, she sought oblivion in the whirl of a gay life.

Among numerous other paintings which he had brought with him from Europe, was one but half finished. Whenever that restlessness of spirit, which he could not otherwise assuage, came upon him, shutting himself up in his studio, he would work upon this painting for days without rest. It was a sketch of some picturesque Italian ruins; and a wandering minstrel-girl playing on a guitar. But that girl might have sat in state within those palace walls ere they had crumbled into dust, so superbly haughty was the carriage of the head, lifted with its radiant eyes to the heaven above, which, with all its southern hue and splendor, was not half so deliciously soft and sunny as the smile of mingled sweetness and sadness upon her lip.

Rosa had already been a wife many months when the appearance in New York was first announced of the young *débutante*, with whose success all southern Europe then rung.

Of late she had been but little into society, and the chastened smile which some concealed joyousness woke upon her face had given those soft, blue eyes, those pale, fair lineaments, a new and winning charm. And that dawning hope was reflected in Mark's breast by a gleam of its original brightness. Though he shut himself up more closely in his studio in consequence, he had given up, in a measure, the too free use of wine, in which he had for a season indulged, and his manner had regained all of its old courtesy; something

more of tenderness than he had ever previously manifested towards her, whose old light-heartedness came rushing back with the change, and, at times, won him to a better realization of the indissoluble bond between them.

He had consented, without a question or a comment, when Rosa had requested him to accompany her to the opera in the evening ; and, with a heart unusually light, she had flitted in and out of the studio which had been fitted up for him in their own house, — now with light words striving to win him from his grave mood, and now bending over his shoulder, and launching into warm and passionate encomiums on the beauty which grew at every touch beneath his hand. He scarcely heard her words, he paid her little heed, until, suddenly bending forward, and shading the dark eyes of the girl in the painting from his view, she said,

“ You will quite forget your pale little wife in the glory of la belle minstrel’s eyes.”

With a quick, startled expression, as though he would have detected some deeper meaning than her words expressed, he looked up ; but he met only a smile of pleasant interest, fading into doubt lest she should have angered him.

“ Signor Mark, you have kept me waiting these ten minutes past.”

The half-gay, half-impatient tones of his wife’s voice fell upon the artist’s ear, rousing him from a revery, which the rustle of silken drapery had not broken with her entrance. The sun had set as the last touch of his brush fell caressingly upon the canvas before him, and with the shadows of the falling night fell oblivion to the present upon his soul, bringing memories of the olden time.

From the crowded house, with its array of beauty and fashion, the eyes of the wife wandered with furtive glances to the face of her husband. In that bright light she fancied that he looked older than she had ever before thought him ; there was an unusual pallor on his check, and his lip was com-

pressed and stern. He did not look ill in health, but as though oppressed by some great weariness of mind. Perchance, at that moment, he was questioning himself if the sacrifice of his love to the desire to surround himself by the luxurious appurtenances of wealth had, in its consummation, crowned his days with content; if the sacrifice of her whose young heart had been lured into a desolate bondage by the marriage vows, in the echo of which the voice whose low accents had won her forever had forever ceased, was without avail. And one suffering, tortured heart in another's bosom — was that also but a bubble in his path?

Whatever might have been the questioning which self put to self in that hour, it was broken by the plaudits of the crowd and the rising of the curtain; and, bending forward, he beheld a woman's form, radiant in her gay robes, her flower-wreathed hair; and through the lights above the bended heads he met the resplendent eyes of the minstrel-girl.

As it had echoed through his studio at Naples, so floated out that magnificent voice in the very sweetest, saddest cadences of love and despair, while its echoes fell down and mingled with the surging moan of the tumult within his breast, raging as it had done when that low and sad voice had bade him "go." Mechanically he answered in the affirmative, when a gentleman by his side asked if he had seen Signora Beatrice when abroad.

"Was she then upon the stage?"

"No, she was in San Carlo," was the brief rejoinder; and Rosa heard no more.

But she beheld the sudden flush of intense emotion succeed the late pallor of his cheek; his burning glance riveted upon the counterpart of that minstrel-girl, whose ideal beauty she had deemed he worshipped but as the finest consummation of his artistic talent; and the rigidity of despair settled down upon the pale young face by his side,

"Take me home, — I am ill, — I am faint!" she whispered,

hoarsely; but he heard her not. Beatrice was singing him back to Italy, and lower, lower sank the drooping head, before which the lights, the crowd, were fading into darkness. The confusion attendant on the rising of their party, as Rosa was carried out, drew the attention of the house upon them, and with it the glance of the cantatrice. With his face flushed by tumultuous emotions, Mark Allan stood erect; and, resting on his shoulder as he moved out with his unconscious wife, lay the golden head, and still, white face; and then the rising of the crowd with fresh acclamations, more rapturous applause, died away upon their ears.

“Go back, — it was the heat; I am better now!” with a strange self-command over herself, Rosa said to him, as he stood beside the carriage in which he had placed her, entirely restored to consciousness by the cool evening air.

The voice which bade him return trembled not; but, had the light fallen upon her face, the blanched cheek and look of keen misery would have startled him. The anguish which her voice concealed was but too legibly stamped thereon; and, drawing back into the furthest corner, she put aside the hand which rested hesitatingly upon the carriage door, and again repeated he had better go. He obeyed her; but the chill of those icy fingers lay yet upon his own burning hand, long after he stood again in the presence of the cantatrice.

With a rapid step the wife passed from the carriage to the studio of her husband. There was no light therein but that of the candle which she had caught hastily up in the hall; but even in that dim light, as she held it above the painting, yet damp beneath the lingering caress of Mark Allan’s last touch, there was no mistaking the likeness he had there portrayed. Long Rosa gazed, and once she lifted her hand menacingly towards the easel, as though she would have dashed aside the poor canvas, with its rich and glowing beauty mocking her despair; but on the transparent little hand there gleamed a golden circlet, and the angry, passion-

ate impulse was lost in the emotion that drew that hand to her heart.

“ And, with the white hands tightly pressed
On a double pulse beneath her breast,”

she stood, with an expression of unutterable woe, looking round on the many ideal creations of the artist; and that which she had scarcely ever heeded before, struck her very forcibly now, and with keenest pain, — either in feature or expression, in every painting about her was there some trace of that strange beauty which had haunted his every dream.

The engagement of the prima donna was verging to a conclusion. Weeks, months, she had been in New York; but since that first night Rosa had never beheld her. She professed herself unable to go out, and her pale cheek confirmed her words.

Never once did the moan of her misery, since the revelation of that night, make itself known to human ear.

From the time of his marriage, Mark had given up what he called professional servitude; but he often beguiled the tedium of his hours of leisure, or his days of restlessness, by an occasional portraiture of some chance-attracted face.

Once more, as in his southern atelier, there sat before his easel a presence which thrilled him with its power. But the long lashes drooped not, as in other days, over eyes whose rays would brighten in his presence. The complexion, then vivid or pale with emotion, now neither paled nor deepened beneath the fire which burned at intervals in the glance of Mark.

There was now no tremulous note mingling with the enthusiasm with which she spoke of Italy to the bevy of admirers who followed her to the artist's studio. Had she ceased to remember when, lingering on the shores of Naples, and watching the declining day, with her dark curls shading the rich bloom of her cheek, and the brightness of life's first earnest

dream irradiating every corner of that buoyant heart, the setting sun suddenly had fallen upon a blighted spirit, dead hopes, — nature smiling on a wreck of all that makes life beautiful? One had stood by her side, and wooed her, in passionate tones, to love; but there fell a sudden doubt upon her heart, — a chilling belief, and of that moment's birth, — that a barrier rose between love and honor.

“By the name which hallows and endears affection, Signor?”

He hesitated; he turned aside, and she gave him no time for subtle, hypocritical answer; only the burning flush, paling to the hue of death, and the low voice which said “Adieu, forever!” were given to memory.

Morning after morning a gay group gathered around the artist's easel, and always the same face of haughty repose turned upon him. Again and again she conversed freely of their old acquaintance in Italy; but never by word or glance could he perceive that the faintest memory of that scene upon the shores of Naples lingered yet in her recollection.

Once only did the color vary upon her cheek; and then Mark Allan, believing he had discovered the talisman which would throw open to his baffled gaze the heart which pride had closed upon him, brought down upon his wife's bowed head the consummation of that woe which in solitude she vainly shunned.

Beatrice was to give the artist but one more sitting; the portraiture of that superb face was nearly completed, when all at once upon the gay converse of those surrounding her fell a voice which caused her to rise from her seat, and confront the speaker with an impulse irresistible. Whatever emotion it was that awoke so deep a crimson upon her cheek, and flashed with such bitter scorn upon the gray-haired old man before her, it at once arrested the attention of Mark, by whom she was alone observed; but the inference which he

drew from her sudden emotion was widely at variance with the truth.

In the face of Mr. Evans, she recognized one whose deed had cast the heaviest shadow upon her youth ; in those tones she heard once more the voice which had rung the alarm of deadly despair in her ear.

An impulse which he did not seek to resist led Mark Allan to desire a more distinct recognition of the emotion which the presence of the father of her rival had evidently stung from its repose in the heart of her before him. What mattered it to him that his words of forbidden tenderness stabbed the heart of that proud, unhappy being, whose woman's pride had closed, with an untrembling hand, her wounds from every human eye, so that he but soothed the wound which his love and pride had alike received, in the balm of Beatrice's final retraction of those parting words, that subsequent proud demeanor ?

One after another he dismissed his guests, until, by her side once more, for the first time since they had met he stood alone.

In the mellow light shining from above upon her head sat Beatrice, in the luxurious chamber which he had of late consecrated to his artist life. She was in the act of gathering her shawl about her to depart. He grasped her hand passionately, and the dark beauty of those eyes, which she had taught to droop beneath no human gaze, was upon him, — those eyes beneath which he had felt his spirit quail, the words ebbing to his lip grow cold and mute. But now he was blind to their austerity. A light had penetrated to his brain, which had ignited there all the mad, delirious passion which had been growing with her presence. The weight of his marriage vows lay in his memory but as a cold obligation towards society, which selfishness, in its maturer, unchecked growth, now spurned in the delirium of a will and passion never conquered.

“Beatrice, I am with you once more; the world and its forms no longer divide us! You would have hidden your soul from my penetration, for in your love there was despair; but the moment’s anguish has dispelled the illusion you sought to create, and heart to heart reveals itself in nature’s irresistible abandonment to the spirit’s impulse. Once you deemed you had cause to doubt my sincerity; thus I throw aside the bond which binds me to all the man of the world holds of value, and make my world, my heaven, in you!”

And he would have sealed the mad compact of his sin upon the brow of Beatrice; but she drew back, with a shudder, from the contact of those burning lips, and looking upon him still with those strange bright eyes, she spoke.

“As Beatrice listened to you in silence on the shores of Naples, so has she now. Then this heart beat like the wing of a prisoned bird against my bosom; now there awakens to your words scarce one throbbing pulse. Then the singing-girl of San Carlo loved as Mark Allan has never yet in his wildest dream conceived; but between herself and the honorable existence of that love rose the world’s high barrier—poverty—and a name over which fell the world’s shadow; although that shadow had grown out of that over which she had neither knowledge nor control. Listen, now, Mark Allan, while I tell you I cast back the imputation which you would throw alike upon my truth and my dignity! Listen, and know, before you charge her again with false accusation, if the woman who stands before you has not true cause and right to that emotion which awoke indignant within her breast, in the presence of her childhood’s bitterest oppressor.

“Recall to memory—if, alas! it be not too frequent an occurrence of pleasure to the prosperous and the opulent—a night of midwinter’s deepest rigor, when the chiming of vesper bells where the cross guards the sanctuary, and the music of glad voices which arose from the rich man’s fireside, commemorated the rising of Gethsemane’s star; when the

carriages of rich owners drew up, with their light-hearted occupants, before the long row of brilliant, tempting windows; when from the most luxuriant of them all stepped forth one whom already life had taught to be mute and deaf to unattractive misery, — how protectingly, how tenderly he led the golden-haired child by his side, from the moan of the starving! I see your memory aids you to that recollection. Well, Mark Allan, — for all would say it was well for her, — look upon the consummation of that childhood! Behold the pariah, the outcast, once more, in the *prima donna* of San Carlo!

“You were charitable to her then; you are alike charitable to her now; but,” — and she drew herself grandly up before that abashed presence, — “she will not suffer herself to remain to you forever indebted. As Margery spurned your charity then, so Beatrice now spurns the proffer of your dishonorable love! Thus from your canvas she effaces the personation of a face of which she would counsel you to utter forgetfulness;” and, lifting a brush by her side, with bitter, reckless haste, which he had no power to interrupt, she obliterated the portraiture of herself from his easel.

She beheld the color come and go, and leave the quivering lips of Mark like marble; and the promptings of a noble heart rose up with a sudden remorse, at leaving so much misery as his countenance portrayed, with but bitterness and added misery in her parting words. “She was but a child, and knew not what she did,” she said to herself, as for a moment she stood with averted face. Then a quick, earnest impulse seized upon her, and she approached Mark.

“Do not think, hereafter, when you recall me, that you robbed a careless, dreamy youth of its sunshine, — a joyous, brilliant womanhood of its peace; for I would not have you hereafter suffer undue remorse for the wrong which you may think that you have done Beatrice. That youth knew neither sunshine nor dreams, until, for a brief season, you called them into being. Had this womanhood known no memory of those

dreams, there would have been but little in its blank existence to be recalled. If you have disenchanted me of love, without you I had never known the enchantment. In His mercy, God has strengthened a weak human heart to resist the temptation of that sin which you have committed; and you have but the desire, not the deed, to answer for to Him. For any and all wrong in an uncontrolled passion you have done me, I forgive you. To the golden-haired Rosa say Margery forgives, in remembrance of the first words spoken in kindly sympathy to the unhappy outcast, the bitter wrong done in the name which that outcast had blessed in her grateful love. And O, Mark Allan! if that gay child has grown into an unhappy wife, go, I beseech thee, and say to her, 'I have sinned against thee, in my weakness; strong in my penitence, I dare make my confession, and seek of thee absolution, next to my God.'"

She had thrown back the clustering hair from her face as she spoke; and as she now stood, her arms folded mournfully, that beautiful countenance no longer averted, or passionless beneath the control of a proud, strong will, he for the first time saw that those full, white lids crushed great tears beneath them. Humiliation, angry bitterness, were all forgotten by Mark Allan. He roused himself with a sudden effort. The quick movement of his upraised hand was eloquent in its motion; words could not have better interpreted the giant combat between the earnest resolve for good, and the long ruling passion within his breast. With the expression of sorrow, of commiseration, on the face of her who had suffered so proudly, who forgave so nobly, instantaneously there leaped into his breast that innate nobility always adherent to the human heart; that immortal purity of soul, the transmission from God to his children of virtue, always existing, however unfortunate or pitiable may be its possessor, beneath the accumulation of evil passions, fed into vast strength by that weakness to which all human hearts are prone.

Hark! he was speaking, — not as Mark Allan had ever spoken before.

"Beatrice, you have dispelled the curse of my life; you have taught me the meagreness of that which I have desecrated by the name of affection. There has been no love, for there has been no purity, in my heart. Your resolution is stern, your rebuke is bitter; but you have divested a life of its pitiable illusions; self knows its littleness, — its arrogance will never more offend."

"I would not leave you unhappy," said Beatrice, as she gathered her shawl again about her to depart, pressing back the tears which sprung to her eyes; but with a strange pleasure in the midst of her pain, caused by this evidence of the sacrifice of his pride to truth.

"Leave me not in utter disbelief of my present sincerity! Add not to the shame which I confess to you the sting of your own contempt, Beatrice!"

She grasped his arm, in the eagerness of the impulse in which she spoke.

"There was no faith in the past, like the present; there was no hope in the future, like that I have in thee now."

One sweet, hopeful smile fell cheeringly down upon his heart, and Beatrice was gone.

"Will he never come? Will he never look upon her?"

It was a faint and trembling voice which broke upon the silence of that darkened chamber, in which only a woman's form glided about with subdued and cautious step.

"Give me more light to look upon her! I cannot see her distinctly; the shadows fall so heavy beneath these curtains."

And, in obedience to that same low voice, the attendant in the chamber suffered a deeper ray of light to penetrate to the dim atmosphere; and the young mother raised herself feebly from her pillow, gazing rapturously upon the tiny linaments around which fell her own golden hair. With the

increase of light, the child opened its eyes, and Rosa saw that they were large, dark and familiar in their strange beauty, as they fixed themselves wonderingly upon that ray of light. As she gazed, her hand pressed itself in the old way to her heart, and she buried her face languidly in her pillow.

The sun which had risen on the dawning of that child's life rode high in the meridian, as it, for the first time, was cradled into living rest upon her bosom, and in its little face she strove to solve the enigma of its future destiny. Alas! unhappy Rosa! you deemed beauty then love's sovereign seal. If so, where was the glorious smile, the perfect symmetry of Beatrice's matchless face, and her isolated life? Where the bloom on your own mother's cheek, — her arid, wasted life? "Give her beauty, that she may be beloved!" prayed the mother; but her lip moved not to the burden of "keep her from temptation!"

"Will he never come?" she questioned again, as the hour wore on, and still Mark came not; and they knew then it was better that she should know the truth. He was ill; he could not come. That was better than if he cared not; — this last Rosa could not endure.

Over and over she questioned them if her child was not lovelier in its baby beauty than other children; and they smiled at what seemed the solicitous pride of the young mother, as they answered in the affirmative. "And if she grows in beauty in his absence, she will be lovelier when Mark sees her," the mother whispered to herself; and they wondered that her interest in her new-born child should make her so forgetful of her husband's danger.

The day came at last on which father, mother and child, were to be united. Still in the heart of Rosa lay the memory of the charm with which the cantatrice had enthralled her husband's heart; but a proud, delicious triumph in her child's power vibrated to every thought of Beatrice. The adoring worshipper of the beautiful would find himself more

and more attracted by the daily-increasing beauty of his child's being, revenging, as it were, her mother's wrong.

With glistening eyes she beheld those fragile limbs, so rarely-modelled in infancy, robed in the embroidered dress, enveloped in costly laces; and she laid it caressingly down to rest upon her own wildly-palpitating bosom, as she waited the coming of its father. What to him would be the memory of syren or songstress, when that sunny face nestled to his heart, a shield against all intruders in the sanctuary of mother and child? Hark! by the rising flush upon her cheek, he is at hand.

The languor of long illness weighs upon the old firm and buoyant tread; — or, can it be but Mr. Evans, who seeks her presence, — the gray-haired, tremulous old man, whose hand wanders around the knob of that door, closed yet against them all? It opens slowly; he stands upon the threshold, — Mark, her husband! But a nameless dread paralyzes the form which seeks to rise with its proud burden gathered to its breast; the rapturous smile of welcome changes to a mute glance of miserable inquiry.

He hears her hurried breath, the bursting sob of terror; and an expression of unutterable sadness is visible upon his haggard face, as he questions,

“Are you by the window, Rosa?”

“By the window, in the sunlight. O, Mark, do you not see me?”

With a step that vainly spurns at caution, he approaches her; the tall figure, emaciated by long suffering, towering with tenacious stateliness above the wandering, feeble step. He will not yield one inch of that old and haughty carriage of his person; he will not suffer himself to accept support or aid in his midnight way.

“Mark,” sobs the voice at the window; for a marble form intercepts his passage; the radiant face of hope smiling up to the poor, blind eyes that see her not. But the warning

comes too late ; the cold form of the statue meets his touch, his cheek grows red, his wan lip quivers.

“ It is but a little hand, but very strong, O, my husband, in the love which the ring you placed thereon symbolizes ! ”

Was it his poor, deserted wife, — the childish, shy Rosa, — who spoke to him in such tones of love and strength, — who led him to the great arm-chair in which she herself sat, and, bending down her lips to his hollow cheek, with the warm kiss which fell thereon, whispered, in tones which echoed through his innermost being,

“ Thy child, God’s gift to me, is on my bosom. Will you not take it to your own ? ”

And, responsive to the sigh which answered, she laid it there, and it smiled faintly up at the worn face bent above it ; and thus Mark Allan received his child ! Thus Rosa beheld the shadow which lay between her husband and the recognition of its beauty, and to her heart there came a wiser, holier knowledge of the divine attributes of love.

“ It was easier to learn it from yourself than from other lips, Mark ! for in the revelation of your suffering there came even out of that sorrow a more precious conviction, that I might henceforth be of use to you, helping you to endure it,” answered Rosa, when Mark had told her all.

How it came upon him all at once, the sharp, agonizing realization of that fear which had lain for weeks in his brain, — of that sudden pain, which, burning beneath his lids, had left, with its gradual cessation, but thick gloom, impenetrable darkness ; and of the stubborn pride which had willed that he alone, the sufferer, should make known to her his suffering, and Rosa had answered him.

Months have glided onward into the past, and a shadowed calm rests upon the household of Mark Allan. Those shadows must linger now always in life about his footsteps, — for with that exceeding love and strength, manifested by the mother of his child in his hour of human weak-

ness, there awoke an ineffable and grateful tenderness. Reverently memory guarded the recollection of Beatrice, with stern faithfulness subduing the manifestation of that forbidden tenderness, to which it were false to honor and duty to yield. But that affection which seeks to feed the hunger of its hopelessness neither on the present nor the future, living only on the memory of the dead past, hidden from all mortal eyes, dwelt yet in the breast of Mark. For love there is no death; of immortal birth, it is of life immortal.

When Mark Allan had said to Beatrice, in the profundity of his humiliation and self-accusation, "There has been no love, for there has been no purity, in my heart towards you," he spoke truly: but even then he realized how strong, how all-pervading, was the emotion which awoke, purified by the fiery ordeal to which the stern, just accusation of Beatrice subjected him.

And a shadow, of which he knows not, hovers also about the foot-steps of his young wife. It steals cold between herself and the child upon her bosom; and in vain she shuts her eyes to its sombre gloom, — it will not leave her.

Close it presses in the dark night, and in the dawning day, which breaks upon her, with her thin white hands, circled by its golden band, lying faint upon her heart. But her lips seal themselves in strong resolve over the fear which is upon her.

Mark is going away. He has consulted an oculist of foreign eminence, and his answer has awakened strong hope in his heart. In Germany he seeks restoration to light, and in the buoyancy of his heart he takes his child to his knee, and speaks, in a clear, joyous voice, of the blessed hour of his return. And in all the gay enjoyments, the tranquil happiness, which those days of reünion bring sunnily to the poor blind one in the far future, Rosa hears herself included with a tender, prominent care, as in silent atonement of the past's abandonment. But she steadies her voice, to answer always in the same quiet tones the oft-recurring question, "Tell me,

Rosa, has our child her mother's eyes?" with "They are like only to those of the minstrel-girl in your studio!" and there is a misty sadness in her own blue orbs, as unconsciously Mark draws the little one closer to his breast.

But still the low voice cheers the invalid on his way with the blessing of her hopeful words, until the final parting passes, with the waning of the early autumn days. Over the blue Atlantic shines Hope's alluring star, warming with its rays the once more buoyant heart of Mark; and, looking backward with wistful tenderness towards her helpless child, Rosa turns her glance to the home of earth's weary pilgrim.

CHAPTER IV.

" Thus the solemn calm, en zoning
Life's wild tumult, shall be thine;
And thy trust, in love atoning,
Lift thee to the life divine."

SARAH H. WHITMAN.

Winter's frosts and winter's snows lie upon the dreary bosom of the north; but the heart of the great city thrills warmly to the song of the gay cantatrice gushing back upon its ear.

Over the waters come frequent cheering bulletins from the invalid, and, with their glad tidings, stills the echo of the applause which greets the presence of the queen of song. But the old troubled look comes not back again to Rosa's face; she only murmurs a softer lullaby to her child, holds it closer to her bosom.

And now, as the rigor of the winter wanes, around the circle from which the presence of the smiling bride had been long withdrawn goes a low, half-audible whisper, as though all shrank from the recognition of such a doom for youth and

beauty. It mingles with the adulation proffered to Beatrice, and she sighs more profoundly, with a deeper sadness than the rest.

Joy, O wanderer! who never thought again through those budding trees to look upon the fruit enshrined in the sanctuary of home, — mother and child! Through the long avenue he sees the slender columns, the curtained casements. On, coachman, on! With those eyes undimmed, except by an emotion deep and true, Mark would look once more upon his household. Silence! silence! the returned would announce himself.

No, not from the old familiar chamber, not from the sunny breakfast-room, comes the liquid laugh of childhood; from the long-closed atelier it welcomes him. There sits Rosa, in sweet, wife-like approval to her child, proudly revealing the beautiful creations of its father's genius. The wife hears not the opening door; she sees not the shadow which falls upon the sunlit floor; but the fairy tottering beside her knee draws closer to the young mother, and, bowing its smiling face to the folds of her dress, gazes shyly up, with those strange, dark, beautiful eyes.

As the sunlight had streamed over Beatrice, so fell the full, rich beams of morning down upon the mother and her child. It fell over the golden locks, but the father beheld not the face which it illumined; that was turned towards the painting of the Italian ruins, and the minstrel-girl; and the voice which Rosa believed fell only upon the ear of the All-loving, and the unconscious child, was audible to him.

“And if, O Father, I may never more behold him, suffer the love, which may not die, to minister to his future peace!”

“Rosa, beloved wife!”

She started! Those accents, tremulous as her own, brought the red torrent to her cheek, and sent it flooding back tumultuous to her heart, — that heart over which folded her hand

with a moan of pain, which even the rapturous joy of the moment could not repress; and through the confused, struggling emotions of tenderness and strange terror, the truth dawned in her husband's heart.

He had returned, in the renewed vigor of manhood, with a tender memory of the love which had lighted his days of darkness, eager to lay the residue of his happiness at her feet; and there, in her unwaning youth, — the superhuman beauty of a fast-approaching immortal life softening the once gay blue eyes, and radiating into angelic loveliness over the pale, thin face, — she sat, pointing out in Death's true revelation of all things the wound in her breast.

"Look up, look up, darling Rosa, and pardon the wrong long deplored, long wept, by Mark!" But she only pointed to the child, sitting still and motionless beside her, and he took it to his breast. It nestled there, still turning its bright, smiling eyes upon its mother, while with an expression of unfathomable joy Rosa's head fell languidly back, with gently-closed eyes, upon the cushions of the chair.

But it was the sleep of eternity — the lips, too faint to answer Mark's despairing words, parted never more.

Amid Rosa's papers, shortly after her decease, Mark found the following letter, addressed by her to himself, and written but a few days prior to his return :

"O, Mark, my beloved husband, when you receive this first and last confession, which, had I not been prevented by the infirmity of my life (the fear of lessening in any degree that human tenderness which I have craved unto idolatry), I should have made you with my own lips long ago, I shall have ceased to be. All along I have said, in my prayer to God, Suffer me but to live to instil into his heart how deep is the desire of his child's dying mother that he will give to her darling a wiser guide to guard her to womanhood. But the warning voice whispers more and more audibly, with the

day's decline, and in the solemn silence of the night, 'Make ready, young mother, to surrender up thy maternal guardianship, for the future affinity between thy freed spirit in the life immortal and thy child on earth,' and bids *mé* say how fervent is the trust, the desire, I leave to you.

"Do you remember, Mark, how, when I was still a little child, I went out with you, one cold Christmas eve, to make a few trifling childish purchases? It was just before you went away, and perhaps you will be able to recall it. That night a child accosted us, whom you repulsed; and, fearing to offend you, I framed some errand by which to rid myself of your presence, that unrestrained I might yield to the impulse which drew me towards her. While you were absent from me, in my haste to express my sympathy, in childish ignorance and thoughtlessness I gave her my mantle. It was a new and costly gift of papa's. My nurse affected or experienced great fear lest blame should fall upon her; and, in answer to her tears, I suffered it to be supposed it had been stolen from the carriage. In his severe, and, perhaps, just determination, to check youthful crime and vagrancy, papa sought out and detected the poor recipient of my most fatal bounty. In indescribable anguish I heard the child Margery's doom. In miserable weakness I shunned confession of my falsehood; and, O Mark, then began the misery of my future life. Day and night that poor, wan face reproached me, in my secret thoughts, alike in gayety or loneliness; and when from that terrible illness I recovered to hear all lament the injury received in my appearance, I felt it was God's just and righteous award for the sin which I had committed. O, if the poor, weak, pampered child had had any one to have bestowed half the attention to her erring, but loving heart, that was lavished upon her physical well-being, she would have grown into a different womanhood. From the constant moan which followed my restoration, for that poor, perished bloom, I turned to the kindly letters which you wrote

to me. From the first I was tempted to say to you, 'I am no longer your beautiful, but your poor, pale, but still loving Rosa;' but I dared not, lest you also should cease to love. You came back; and, Mark, I saw that you had detected the falsehood of my correspondence with you; and then, in the midst of my regret, came your avowal of affection, the proffer of your hand. Mamma said I was to marry you. I grew giddy with the abrupt realization of my girlish dreams. When I awoke, when the depth of a wife's emotions revealed to me (forgive, O Mark, the words!) the hollowness of your own, with sorrow indescribable, and weak, miserable pride, I sought to veil from all eyes my disappointment. A little while I led that frivolous life in which there was no enjoyment; and then a hope, in which there was the certainty of happiness, dispelled the gathering shadows. Much of your old tenderness returned, to add to the unutterable joy with which I anticipated, in my child's being, a shelter from every sorrow.

"And suffer me briefly to pass over that episode so painful in both our lives. In the presence of Beatrice I recognized one over whose well-remembered loveliness you had hung in more than an artist's admiration of its counterpart. In those careless words which told Mr. Leslie that you had met in Naples my heart drank the poison which was to rankle there in secret. And when our child was born, I asked, I prayed but for beauty. And God gave it to her. She was lovely to a degree rarely seen in infancy. Not as a tender, helpless child would I give her to a father's love and care. I had looked upon my own pale face until its contrast with the brilliant beauty of Beatrice maddened me; and, with vain pride, I rejoiced in the gift which Heaven had bestowed upon my loneliness only as her beauty in its power should overshadow all other memories. I waited for the moment in which my exultant eyes should behold its recognition. Ah! Mark, that hour never came. In that terrible moment, when, standing on the threshold, and looking into that sunlit room, you asked 'Are you by

the window, Rosa?' I felt the hand which had smitten me through thee was indeed All-wise. I saw how little was the boon so madly craved — the utter nothingness of beauty, when life's shadow fell, and all else was barren waste! What had been mamma's loveliness to her husband sightless? What Beatrice's radiance, to thee blind?

"Soon over the joy with which I realized how necessary to you I was, Mark, came the conviction of the brevity of my days. But you were going away, and I would not willingly have imparted it to you, to chain you to my side, when hope was waking into existence in that heart which had patiently resigned itself to its destiny. We parted, and even then I was almost without hope of ever seeing you again on earth. I was right; closer and closer pressed the shadow which I knew was that of Death; and there was deep solicitude in my breast for the child so soon to be motherless; for the child, Mark, for it would not be so with you. 'Who will care for thee, and guide thy childish impulses aright, my dear child?' was the ever-recurring thought. Soon it was answered by a messenger, whom God sent to me in my time of great want.

"I was sitting with my darling alone in my chamber, not many days ago, towards the day's decline, when I was told that there was a lady below, who refused to send up her name, but who was desirous of seeing me, and begged permission to be received in my own apartment, if I was unable to go down. I consented, wondering which of my acquaintances it could be. Something there was in the outline of the veiled figure which crossed the threshold of the door that caused me to clasp closer to my heart the child upon my knee. With a quick gesture she put back her veil, and, O Mark, the woman whose portrait by yourself I have looked upon with such passionate despair stood before me, and (God forgive me for the wrong which I did her childhood!) I beheld Margery, the outcast. It was the rapid utterance of those words which revealed to me, in the person of Beatrice, that of the unhappy

Margery, which hushed unspoken the bitter words trembling on my lip.

“The evening fell — fell upon the revelation of her life, so nobly, truthfully given, that in my heart I prayed, while my child slept on my bosom, and Beatrice spoke, ‘O, that one like her, my God, might counsel and guide this poor, lone child in her youth to that same noble integrity which makes womanhood so beautiful!’ Everything, Mark, has she told me; I know all, from the period in which by the sister of mercy she was taken under the protection of their order, and educated in Baltimore. From thence she went to Naples. That you were there beloved by her she confesses, with a frankness which neither wounds nor repels me; that that love was reciprocated by you, I cannot doubt. Why you separated I cannot divine. I only realize (let me convey it to you in all tenderness and commiseration for the wrong you did yourself equally with me) that Rosa Evans became your wife as the inheritor of her father’s wealth. Redress the wrong, O Mark Allan, you did that noble heart; assuage the wound you inflicted on your own, and for which your remorse-burdened life has atoned; and make restitution for the misery I also once endured by giving my child a protector. From Heaven there will be ever whispered blessings on the breast cradling my darling’s head above the noble heart of Beatrice.

“Once I prayed that I might but behold you look upon the beauty of my child. Never, never on earth will that prayer now be granted; but it is in perfect resignation to the Divine will that I say, ‘God’s will be done.’”

Not then, when his heart was torn with remorse and self-upbraidings, could Mark Allan endure the suggestion which those words awoke. Time poured the balsam of all humanity upon the heart which had bled with keenest accusations against himself; olden memories pressed upon him with irresistible power.

The strength of Beatrice's faith in that love-atoning was evidenced in the watchful care, the tender nourishment, of the dark-eyed, smiling child of the dead ; who, calling her by the blessed name of mother, was never suffered to forget the being who gave her birth, now lifted to the life divine.

MIRANDA.

I KNOW thee here on thy enchanted isle,
A poet's vision, by high art enwrought,
Thy peerless beauty cloistered from all guile
In the pure Parian, perfect as his thought.

Pleading with Prospero, I see thee stand,
Blanched by such tender pity as to seem
Like a fair Aphrodite on the strand,
Born of the shivered foam-wreath's snowy gleam.

Almost from thy pale lips I hear the prayer
For those "poor souls" that perish in thy sight;
Their cry of terror thrilling on the air
Through the grim horror of that tempest-night.

The wild winds tangle back thy waving hair,
As their woe-laden echoes they repeat,
Wakening thy heart to sorrowful despair,
O'ershadowing thy smile, serenely sweet.

Dark cloud-rift, floating o'er the mellow haze
Of thy young spirit's tranquil morning dream,
Veil that bright future yet to meet thy gaze,
Arched with the glory of love's iris beam.

But we gain courage from thy sad, sweet face;
Earth's tempests sweep o'er every soul with pain,
And yet, for us, some wave of Heaven's grace
May bear rich blessings to a solemn main.

FLORENCE VASSAL;

OR, REMINISCENCES OF MY YOUTH.

Thy cheek too swiftly flushes ; o'er thine eye
The lights and shadows come and go too fast ;
Thy tears gush forth too soon, and in thy voice
Are sounds of tenderness too passionate
For peace on earth."

IF, gentle reader, you have a leisure hour at your disposal, draw your easiest chair into the cosiest corner of your apartment. If it be night, — and a cold, stormy one, like this on which I am writing for you, — if the wind sighs mournfully about your casement, draw your curtains, fold on fold, o'er the dreary view of the cheerless scene without. Fill the grate with the melting anthracite, and bid its cheery song drown the sobbing of the wintry wind. Forget that the rain comes down with a dull, monotonous sound, — that the moon has veiled her face in the sable clouds. Suffer the ice which has crusted over your heart in life's hours of wintry strife to melt in the soft and genial atmosphere of hope.

Mingling with the lamp-light, the fire-light now falls upon a fair face before me, looking down from its portrait-frame. As I look upward to this face wild waves of feeling are stirred, and down amid the waters there gleams a jewel long lost, whose rays are falling soft on memory's shore, while half-forgotten tones, sweeter than the wildest note of music, come faintly to my ear. Olden memories are waking into

life and beauty; my girlhood's most earnest love comes back, and in the sunshine of memory disappears the gathered frost of maturer years.

The portrait of Florence Vassal hangs before me. I look upon a white brow gleaming amid clustering curls, — curls needing but a thread of gold woven amid them to look life-like as the dark ringlet, shorn from that young head many a year ago, which lays before me. In the Grecian nose, the arched brows, the delicate crimson lips, lays a world of beauty; but the eyes, so softly bright with their heavily-fringed and drooping lids, — O, how they haunt me, tear-laden as I have looked upon them, even while the warm heart-smile lingered on the tremulous lips! There is a slight curl of those lips — an almost imperceptible haughty carriage of the head, betraying the proud, high spirit which once throbbed within that bosom, over which, close to the slender throat, is gathered the rich lace which frills the dark bodice, fitting close to the symmetrical form.

Aside from its intrinsic value as a truthful portrait, this beautiful painting is valuable as a work of art. At a glance one must recognize a master-hand in the rich coloring, the soft shading of the hair, and the life-like expression of the mouth and eyes.

This fair likeness of Florence — this silken curl, with a small package of letters, worn and faded by time, the memory of her depth of feeling, her genius and her destiny — are all that is left to me of the friend and companion of my early girlhood.

It was early in the summer of 18 — that I visited, for the first time, Glenary, the delightful home of the Vassals. The house was a spacious, airy building, of a dark-gray stone, surrounded by extensive and highly-cultivated grounds. The dwelling itself could boast little of architectural beauty, but its proprietor had added a wing at the left, with deep, embayed windows, which commanded a wide and most enchanting prospect of the surrounding country. In this wing he

fitted up a valuable library ; and in that pleasant room, with the bright sunlight falling through voluminous curtains, and filling every nook and recess with its chastened light, Florence and myself were wont to linger away many a bright summer morning of our existence. Balconies, with balustrades of fretted stone, had been thrown out from numerous windows, around which clustered the honeysuckle, within whose shadow the running rose laid its crimson blossoms to rest upon its leaves, and Glenary grew into an abode of far more picturesque beauty than many more costly residences in its vicinity.

Unlike the greater portion of his neighbors, who were in the country but for a brief season, Mr. Vassal made Glenary his home for the entire year. The city, with its stir and excitement, offered no inducement to the grave, intellectual man, who found his chief happiness in his books, and his devotion to a lovely invalid wife, and their two children, Florence and Annie ; the last-mentioned a gentle, quiet girl, some three years younger than Florence, whose placid features neither flushed with excitement or kindled with passion, content and happy ever to linger by her mother's side, bowed above some light feminine task, listening with absorbed attention to her father's voice, as from some book he sought to entertain the invalid's sometimes weary hours. In the meantime Florence, on a spirited horse, would scour the country for miles, and burst upon them like a sunbeam, all flushed and gay with the excitement of her daring horsemanship. Then Mr. Vassal would draw her to his knee ; and, with her riding-whip still in her hand, and her little straw hat tossed carelessly back, she would, with merry words and laugh, win the color to her mother's cheek, and the light to her eye, while even Annie would pause from her work, and her own low laugh mingle with her sister's. I have often seen the mother smile the brightest when Florence's ringing laughter fell upon her ear, although, perchance, but the moment prior

a heavy footstep had made her start, and press her hand to her head. One pleading smile when a wilful word darkened her father's brow, and the cloud disappeared from thence in an expression of almost idolizing love. He looked upon the beautiful face of his eldest-born, and once more in her he beheld the young beauty of his wife when she stood before the marriage-altar in the spring-time of life.

He saw Florence's dark eyes flash, and her red lip curl in pride and passion, and recalled his own boyish passions, which time and experience had subdued. He forgot that passion and uncontrolled pride is far more dangerous to the impulsive heart of woman than to man. He knew her to be richly dowered in beauty and in talent ; to be capable of experiencing a deep, devoted affection. He forgot that that very intensity of feeling was far more perilous to her future happiness than had it not existed, linked, as it was, with ungoverned waywardness and passion.

The pleading smile, the dimmed eyes, the gentle obedience to his will, lulled him to security. He forgot that she yielded to no other ; that he alone had the courage or the power to thwart her, and in her affection only she yielded her will. But when, long afterwards, a love deeper even than that which she had borne him awoke in the girl's heart, and she stood erect before him in all the arrogance of unchecked wilfulness, — when, in his turn, he met the tempest of passion which neither iron will nor stern reproach could quell, — then the veil was lifted which hid the past, and all his forgotten duties came over him when his power was passing away. For more than two years Florence and myself were room-mates at a large boarding-school, at some distance from Glenary. It was her first absence from home ; and, although the allotted school-term had not expired when my own drew near to a close, her petition to return to her home was immediately answered by her too indulgent parents with their assent. It was with mutual grief

we parted, and Florence's tears only ceased to fall when I promised to visit her during the summer.

A fine June morning at length found me at Glenary, according to my promise to Florence. The air was fragrant with the breath of a thousand roses, and the trees, in their fresh green foliage, waved lovingly about the old gray house, casting their shadows, through the open casements, upon the cool, white matting of the chamber-floor appropriated to my use. Florence had filled a vase on the dressing-table with the sweetest of her garden-blossoms, and they flooded the atmosphere with their fragrance. Weary with the fatigue of a long journey, I had laid aside my travelling-dress, and lain down to rest. I was half asleep, when a loud, gay laugh awakened me, and I arose and looked down from my window.

Florence stood upon a balcony just below me on the left, bending down so low that only as the breeze lifted her curls could I obtain a view of her flushed cheek. Upon the green sward beneath there stood a young gentleman, about whose head she had showered an avalanche of flowers. One by one he picked them carefully up ; then, raising his hat, lifted them to his lips, while the color stole faintly to his cheek, and I caught a glance of profound admiration and tenderest expression bestowed on Florence.

"Pshaw, Herbert ! throw them away, or I'll not come down," she commanded, in half-pleased, half-embarrassed tones. But he only smiled, and placed the roses in his bosom, while I wondered not that a moment subsequent she stood beside him, so winningly sweet was the smile he gave her. Then Florence laid her hand upon his arm, and they passed slowly forward amid the shrubbery. I watched them until they disappeared, when, once more throwing myself upon the bed, I fell asleep.

The pressure of warm lips upon my own aroused me near noon, and Florence was bending above me.

"Come, lazy one!" she said; "the dressing-bell has rung, and I cannot spare you longer."

"I have a story to tell you to-night," she continued, as I gave the last touch to my toilet.

"A love-tale, Floy?"

"Hush!" and she held up her finger laughingly, to silence me.

"We have company to-day, — Mr. Herbert Manners," said Florence, again with the same embarrassed air, as we paused at the drawing-room door.

A gentleman, who was conversing with Annie, arose on our entrance, and came forward. He was the same whom I had seen in the garden; somewhat older than I had thought him, graver and more dignified in his appearance; but the smile with which he greeted me as Florence's friend was sweeter even than I had deemed it.

He was evidently very much in love with my friend, and there appeared to be a quiet understanding between himself and her family, who evidently regarded him as her betrothed. But, though she sang the songs which he loved best, though she smiled and at times blushed beneath his glance, still I confessed myself disappointed. There was something, though I knew not what, wanting in her manner. She loved not Herbert Manners as I expected Florence Vassal to love.

With the night came the fulfilment of her promise. She told me of her engagement to Herbert Manners, who was studying law in New York. That, owing to impaired health, brought on by too diligent application to his studies, he had been for many weeks rusticated at a quiet farm-house in the neighborhood of Glenary; that his health had much improved, and he intended, early in the autumn, to return to the city, eager to complete his studies and enter on his profession, when Florence was to become his wife.

When my companion ceased speaking, we both fell into a reverie, and she was the first to speak. "Sometimes," she said,

— and her voice was low, almost sad, — “ sometimes I question myself, Do I really love Herbert as I should? I feel no enthusiasm. I am only very calm. I experience no new or different emotions.”

Her words surprised me; for I, also, was at that moment secretly questioning myself, Did she in truth love Herbert Manners? “ Hush !” I said, earnestly; “ hush ! banish such idle fancies; you should not suffer them to intrude on you now, Florence !” And with a “ good-night ” we separated.

The following morning, with her lover’s appearance, all doubt seemed to have taken wing, and she smiled upon him brightly as my most earnest wish could have desired.

I had been several weeks at Glenary, and Herbert Manners, in the interval, had won much upon my regard, while Florence’s affection and consequent happiness appeared to be daily on the increase, when we received invitations to a brilliant evening party. Herbert was prevented by some engagement from attending us, as usual; and Mr. Vassal accompanied us, at his wife’s earnest desire, for she was then stronger and better than she had been for a long time.

I think that I never saw Florence looking lovelier than she did that night, with a spray of crimson buds in her hair, which I had gathered for her to match Herbert’s bouquet, and the gossamer folds of her white dress floating about her.

The evening was somewhat advanced when Florence and myself stood leaning against the curtains which draped a window, as we watched the graceful movements of the gay dancers.

“ Look !” she said, all at once, in earnest tones; and, following the direction in which she glanced, I beheld a gentleman speaking with our hostess, and evidently directing her attention towards my companion. He was an exceedingly handsome man, taller than Herbert Manners, and of a more powerful form, with a certain proud carriage of the head that was very striking. The forehead was broad and high; the eyes very

dark and lustrous, and filled with a light that no woman could meet, when the heavily-fringed lids were raised, without the color deepening upon her cheek beneath their gaze. The mouth was small, the lips thin and compressed; the cheek pale, as though something of the vigor of manhood had been exhausted. Only in the expression of those eyes, and the smile which at times flitted over his countenance, was there anything passionate or voluptuous; and often there mingled with that smile an expression of bitter irony; but when my glance was first turned towards him his countenance was lighted up with a glow of admiration, and his eye flashed warm and bright upon Florence, as, with our hostess on his arm, he approached her, while the color deepened on her cheek and her lids fell beneath his gaze. But the low, musical voice which fell upon her ear banished all embarrassment; and when he led her to the dance, shortly afterwards, there was a smile on her lip which betrayed her pleasure.

Silently — almost sorrowfully — I watched her, as she floated down the room beside that stately form, and in the pauses of the dance listened to that witching voice, her beautiful eyes raised with a frank, earnest gaze to his.

The last hour of the evening had come, and when the bewildering music of a gay waltz floated through the rooms.

Florence was resting a moment by my side, and Mr. Cunningham had drawn an ottoman before her, where he sat conversing with the ease of an old acquaintance. He arose with the music, begging her once more to join the dancers. Florence rarely waltzed, — it was her mother's wish, and she knew it to be Herbert's also, that she should not, — and she declined; but it was with such evident reluctance that the gentleman felt himself emboldened to repeat his petition; and Florence rose slowly, irresolutely, but a bright smile met her glance, and, with a faint answering one on her own lip, she suffered him to lead her away. He waltzed well, and Florence was fond of dancing. With irrepressible admiration I

was watching their graceful evolutions, when a deep sigh arrested my attention, and, looking round, I beheld Herbert Manners, with a clouded brow, watching that fairy-like form in the distance. With her hand clasped to her side, above a heart beating with excitement, with beaming glance and glowing cheek Florence paused before us.

"You here, Herbert?" she said, with a sweet smile, extending her hand in welcome. He just clasped the taper fingers, replying, in low tones,

"Evidently unexpected, Florence."

There was a slight accent of sternness in his voice, and the smile died away upon her lip, while her voice trembled as she questioned,

"Are you ill, Herbert?"

"Not ill in body."

"You are angry, then, that I have waltzed?"

At that moment, a flower fell from the bouquet which she held upon the floor; and Mr. Cunningham, who had withdrawn a step from our circle, bent down, and with a gay smile placed it in his bosom.

"Not that, not that, Mr. Cunningham!" said Florence, earnestly. But Herbert heard her not; he had turned away, with changing color, when Harry Cunningham placed the flower within his bosom.

"But why not this?" questioned the gentleman. "Will you exchange with me this for the buds which you wear in your hair?"

"Willingly," answered Florence; and, as she spoke, she drew the spray of roses from her hair. They were the flowers which I had gathered, and consequently less prized than the gift of her betrothed.

"Ah, this is indeed more desirable," he said, gallantly, and with a beaming glance he raised them to his lips, — but Florence saw it not. The rose — Herbert's rose — was once more placed within her bouquet, and her glance following

him as he retreated amid the crowd ; but an opposite mirror had reflected the entire group, and Herbert only knew that Florence Vassal had taken a flower from her hair to place it within a stranger's hands, and that man he beheld press to his lips that which the touch of his betrothed should have consecrated to himself alone.

With a cold, almost haughty bearing, Herbert Manners advanced to the side of Florence, as she stood in animated conversation with Harry Cunningham, while we waited for the carriage which was to take us home.

Florence's shawl lay upon a seat before her, and her companion stretched forth his hand towards it. But at the same moment Herbert bent down, and with a flushed cheek himself took it up and folded it about her ; and, drawing her hand within his arm, led her silently to the carriage. Florence's dark eyes flashed, and her lip curled scornfully, as she turned round to Harry Cunningham, and, holding out her hand, which was at once clasped in his, reiterated, with considerable *empressement*, the invitation which she had already given him to her home. There was an expression of blended irony and intense gratification visible on his face as she spoke, and he marked the evident annoyance which Herbert Manners experienced ; but Florence was blind, in the moment's passionate indignation, to everything but her lover's reproach.

We rode home, with Florence leaning back in a corner of the carriage, scarcely deigning to bestow a word on Herbert, and he evidently grieved and most unhappy.

" Florence ! " I began, sadly and reproachfully, when we were alone for the night ; but she professed herself very miserable, and besought me not to chide her, in so tremulous a voice, that I forbore at once.

The following morning found her pale and nervous. Herbert came later than was his wont, and requested her to visit him in the drawing-room. She went down irresolutely, and with evident reluctance. I think that she then experienced

both shame and sorrow for her conduct the previous evening. She told me, that very night, of what passed between them.

Herbert stood awaiting her presence. She went up to him, and held out her hand, smiling. He took it gently in his own, and led her to a seat; but he did not smile, for his heart was for the first time wounded by her.

“You are angry with me, Herbert!”

“Have I no cause to be, Florence?”

“No, Herbert, I think not.”

“Then you can explain,” he said, eagerly.

“But what if, to punish you, I do not choose?” she answered, half-poutingly, and tapping her foot impatiently upon the carpet.

“Then you are not what I thought you to be;—then, Florence, I am indeed bitterly disappointed!”

“Disappointed, sir!” and she drew herself erect, with a proud smile.

“Florence!”—(and, as he spoke, he took her hand within his own, and gazed sadly into the eyes which were flashing with passion)—“disappointed in your affection for me! I have felt it cold in comparison with my own; but you have many to love and be beloved by in return, and I—I am alone, with no human being but yourself to love. I have chidden the selfishness of passion that has yearned for a love like its own. This hour, Florence, I would be glad to know that even that which you have borne me has not all passed away.”

“No, no, Herbert!”—(and she spoke earnestly and truly)—“it is deeper than it has ever been.”

“God bless you for the assurance, darling!” and he raised the little hand which he held, with tender reverence, to his lips.

“What can I do, Herbert, to prove to you my sincerity?” she questioned.

“Believe me incapable of jealousy, or distrust of yourself,

when I beg of you to receive no attentions from Mr. Cunningham. He is no companion for you, Florence ; I know his character from a dear friend. He is profligate and unprincipled, and I would guard my betrothed wife from the very shadow of that which is impure."

His voice was serious, yet gentle withal, and his companion unhesitatingly acquiesced in his wishes.

Then Herbert told her that he must leave her for a brief space ; that he had received letters which would call him to town, on business of sudden import ; but that he should return very soon.

When they subsequently joined us in Mrs. Vassal's apartment, I saw that the cloud had passed from his brow, all grief from my friend's heart.

Shortly, and with a lover's reluctance, his farewell had been given, and Florence and myself stood on the terrace watching his retreating figure.

"It will be dull without Herbert," she said, sadly ; but, even as she spoke, the quick fall of a horse's hoofs coming down the avenue on the opposite side fell on our ear ; and, looking round, we beheld Harry Cunningham.

Florence received him with quiet courtesy, but there was a slight coldness and reserve in her manner, so unlike that of the previous evening, that it could scarcely have escaped his observation ; but he paid no heed to her indifference, and I fancied from the first that he was determined to win her, in despite of her wishes, from the reserve which she at first manifested towards him.

With the eye of a connoisseur he looked over her portfolio of drawings, with alternate commendations and severe criticisms bestowed on her productions ; which I could perceive, from the varying expression of her countenance, at once piqued and flattered her into unusual interest in her visitor. And then he spoke with enthusiasm of the charm of her country home, and the beautiful scenery surrounding Glenary,

while his dark eyes lighted with brilliancy, and the tones of his voice gave wondrous enchantment to his words; but when the conversation turned on life, and society, his eyelids drooped, and a smile of irony, a slight tinge of contempt, gave tone to his light sarcasms on its forms.

By the open piano lay a sheet of music, — a sweet song of the olden times, which Florence had sung to Herbert Manners before he left her. He took it up, called it his favorite song, and requested her to sing it for him. I knew that she would have preferred singing anything else; but there was no alternative. Perhaps it was the thought of Herbert that then touched her heart, saddening her voice, — a voice which was ever sweet and musical.

He sat with bent head while she sang, listening with profound attention. He neither praised the sweet voice, which I knew must reverberate on his memory, nor did he again ask her to sing to him. But when, turning round, she met his glance, there was an expression in those eyes, not bold or passionate, but so full of tender interest, that her cheek flushed, her eyelids fell.

Mr. Vassal came in before he left us, and his courteous invitation to the stranger to ride over, at his leisure, to his house, was eagerly accepted.

And Cunningham forgot not his invitation; day after day he came, and each day, I acknowledged him more fascinating than on the previous; each day Florence lost something of that reserve which she had endeavored to entertain, in obedience to her lover's desire. Daily the color deepened on her cheek; the fever of unrest took manifest possession of her heart; and I longed to write to Herbert Manners, and bid him return ere it was too late. And now Florence's joyous laugh was hushed; now, in deep revery, with her eyes misty with strange dreams, she would sit apart from all others, and wake, at length, to passing objects, with a bursting sigh and paling cheek.

Herbert's absence had been protracted from day to day, and his name was never mentioned now by Florence. One morning, as I read in the library, she came to me habited for a ride, and requested me to accompany her. I have often regretted that I did not ; as it was, I arose and went out to see her mount. She had a beautiful, spirited horse, which she rode, and of which she was very proud. A servant held it before the door, and he bent down, holding out his broad palm to assist his young lady. One instant, the little foot rested within it ; the next, and Florence Vassal gathered up the reins, shook back the dark plume in her cap, raised herself erect with the air of a queen, and, with a light stroke of her whip, was speeding away like an arrow from a bow.

That morning, as we rose from the breakfast-table, Florence and myself had stood side by side gazing from the window, watching the blue mist rising with a lazy, languid motion from the valley and woods below. "I have a presentiment that something unusual will happen to-day," she said. "Sorrow or joy, fair lady, which do you prophesy?" I answered, gayly ; but she did not even attempt to smile.

"Herbert may come, dear Florence, and then you will forget all sadness," I continued ; and again she neither smiled nor answered me, but turned her face towards me, and it was very sad. For a moment she looked at me steadily and mournfully, then turned away.

Florence was right ; there occurred, that day, that which shadowed her future life.

She had ridden far from home, when she reined her horse beneath the shade of a large tree in the forest, leaving the bridle to hang loose about his neck. With a lap full of oak-leaves, she sat linking them together for a wreath for her hat. Absorbed in her task, she heard not a footstep stealing through the woodland. The first sound that fell on her ear was the click of a fowling-piece, followed by its loud report, as its charge swept by directly in front of her horse's head. With

one wild bound the startled animal sprang forward, and before the smoke cleared away horse and rider had disappeared, as a young countryman stepped out from the thicket. He heard the thundering of the horse's hoofs, but no cry of terror told him that that frightened creature bore a rider in the saddle; and he bagged his game, passing leisurely forward, while on, on sped the startled animal. But Florence Vassal was a brave rider, and the color paled not on her cheek, until, suddenly mingling with that heavy tread, came a rushing sound upon her ear. One wild, startled glance she cast around. Before her was the path leading to a precipice's verge, where the waters of a cataract foamed and thundered over the rocks below. On, onward she sped; louder and louder roared the waters; through the opening gleamed now the frail barrier which hedged the precipice's brink. On the left, close at hand, there was a steep, narrow gulley, the space not broad between. The reins in her hand, Florence would have turned the creature's head, and have dared the leap; but now the dauntless heart grew faint, the cheek pale as death. With a wild, convulsive effort, she strove to free her feet from the stirrup, and spring to the ground; but her arm fell faint and nerveless at her side, strength came not at her bidding. An agonized cry for help broke wildly on the stillness as the animal reared itself for the leap. But a strong hand was upon the bridle; there was a fearful struggle; then the horse stood still beneath the stranger's hand, and Florence Vassal sank back upon the arm of Harry Cunningham.

He lifted her from the saddle, and placed her on the green turf, loosening the little velvet riding-cap, and warming those cold hands within his own.

"Darling, darling!" he murmured, with intense passion, as he raised that drooping head, and laid it tenderly on his own broad chest, while the pallid lips grew warm beneath the pressure of his own. "My own, my beautiful!" he whispered, as slow and faint the color deepened in her cheek. For one

brief moment she struggled for freedom; then she lay very still and quiet, listening to his passionate words of love. "You will be my own, nothing shall part us now, mine forever, Florence?" And she bowed her head so low that scarce his listening ear caught, "Forever, Harry!" But ere she ceased, his lips were on her brow, and "Mine, mine ever, Florence Vassal!" fell on her ear; but even as he spoke these words, she raised her hands, put him faintly, feebly away, and, bowing down her head upon her clasped arms, wept bitterly.

"Florence," he said, in a voice so grave and firm, despite its tenderness, that she had no courage to disobey him, "sit down by me and listen;" and she obeyed him, for she was faint with agitation, and her heart was yearning to him. Again he took that trembling hand in his own, and once more in the pressure of his clasp it felt warm.

With eloquent voice and subtle argument he pleaded; and Florence dried her tears while she hearkened, for there was magic in those tones to soothe and win her to yield, though even his words failed to convince her.

"Mine, ever mine, Florence Vassal!" repeated again the deep, rich voice of Harry Cunningham; and now a faint answering assent was audible.

The morning was wearing away, when I laid aside my book, and went out to look for Florence. Mr. Vassal had been sitting with me in the library, looking over letters which he had that morning received. One for Florence lay upon the table, and its address was in the handwriting of Herbert. I was growing anxious about Florence, wondering what could have so long detained her, when I beheld her come in sight, with Harry Cunningham leading her horse by the bridle. I turned away as I beheld them, for I could not bear to look upon them thus with Herbert's letter in my hand. Mr. Vassal met me at that moment with an inquiry for his daughter. "She is now coming up the avenue with Mr. Cunningham," I answered.

"With Mr. Cunningham? Did she ride out with him?"

But at that moment, as we approached the door, we beheld Florence's countenance deathly pale, and saw Harry Cunningham lift her from the saddle. With a faint, wavering step, she staggered forward, and fell upon her father's bosom.

"My dear, dear child, what has happened to you?" he asked, as she burst into tears, while her head sank closer to his breast. She strove to answer him, but her voice was hoarse and indistinct with emotion; and we led her in, while, briefly as possible, Harry Cunningham related the accident which had befallen her, and the terrible danger from which she had been rescued.

"God bless you, Mr. Cunningham! you have saved my child's life, God bless you!" burst from the father's lips, as he turned towards him with cordial, outstretched hand. Cunningham bent over Florence, and spoke to her in a low voice; then, turning to Mr. Vassal, he said,

"I will ride over before sunset, when I would fain speak with you;" and Florence looked down, with crimson cheeks.

When we were alone, she put her hand in mine, and we went up stairs to her chamber. A chair stood before the dressing-table, and she sank down, and buried her face in her hands, once more sobbing and weeping like a child. I fancied her nervous from the excitement through which she had passed, and strove with gentle words to soothe her; but she only wept the more. At last I bethought me of Herbert's letter:

"I have that, dearest Florence, which will change your tears to smiles;" and I placed the letter before her.

She looked up, and her cheek paled, while the hand which she extended trembled like a leaf.

"I cannot read it," she said, tremulously; "open it for me;" and I did as she desired. There were but a few words, to tell her that he would be at Glenary the succeeding day;

but, brief as it was, every word was eloquent with the expectation of the joy of being with her once more.

"To-morrow, to-morrow!" she said, faintly. "I cannot see him, — it will kill me!" She looked so miserable and wild when she again spoke, that I felt for her only tenderness and pity.

"You must write to him," she continued; "you must tell him that all this while I have been cheating myself, as well as him; and, O, tell him how very unhappy I am!"

"Have you no pity for Herbert?" I questioned, reproachfully, as the memory of his tenderness and devotion to her came over me.

"Ah! do be patient with me, do protect me now!" she petitioned. "I am so miserable, so helpless, in this bitter trial!"

But again I besought her to remember the noble, true-hearted Herbert. Of Harry Cunningham I spoke with stern truthfulness and earnest warning. But the tears which fell fast as rain-drops with the mention of her betrothed's name were dried in the indignant flush which glowed upon her cheek when I spoke of Mr. Cunningham.

"And if I believed you, I would love him yet!" she answered, passionately and bitterly, but with steadfast determination in her tone.

Late that afternoon, Florence and myself sat alone in the drawing-room. We could hear Mr. Cunningham's horse stamping upon the turf before the door, and more than once it neighed impatiently; for his master had lingered long with Mr. Vassal in the library.

Florence's cheeks were flushed, and her eyes were filled with a feverish light; the folds of her white dress were tremulous with her restless gestures, and she wound her fingers amid her curls, and tossed them back disordered from her brow. After a while, she was summoned to her father's presence.

I never knew exactly what there passed; but a few moments afterwards Harry Cunningham strode through the hall with a ringing step, and threw himself into the saddle, with a fiery glow on his cheek, and a faint, mocking smile on his lip.

I met Florence in the hall; she was very pale, with her lips compressed as in pain.

"Tell mamma I shall not come again to-night," she said, in a low, hurried voice, and passed on, with a step slower and heavier than it had ever before been.

That evening Mr. Vassal called me to him in the library. He also was pale and sad, and his voice sorrowful, though stern.

"My dear young friend," he said, rising and drawing a chair opposite his own, "I have sent for you to speak with you of my daughter. I count much on your influence with her. Mr. Cunningham, in requital of the service which he this morning rendered, has requested my consent to his engagement to Florence. Even did I not look on her as almost the wife of Herbert Manners, there are considerations which require me to exert a father's authority in opposition to her will.

"I have this day received a letter from an intimate acquaintance of my own. Some report has reached him of attentions offered by this person to my daughter, and he so describes him that I cannot doubt he is a profligate, unprincipled man;—unprincipled he has shown himself in his recent conduct, sparing no pains to win an affection which he knew to be previously pledged to another.

"My child has now left me, for the first time, with bitterness in her heart towards her father. Better had Harry Cunningham left her to perish, than win her to a life of never-dying remorse, such as Florence's will be, if she heeds the voice which would tempt her to perjure herself in the eye of God and man. But it shall be a father's hand, which God

in his infinite mercy will strengthen, that will curb the passion which were death not only to the body, but the spirit ; and though in the struggle the heart break its bonds, better by far give it back in its purity to its Maker, than leave it to become contaminated by the wiles of Harry Cunningham ; ” — and the father raised himself erect, as though he would gain strength for the conflict.

“ Be gentle with her, — love will conquer where nothing else may,” I said, entreatingly.

He gave me the letter of which he had spoken, and in its perusal I learned the cause of Mr. Vassal’s determination, that, aside from her betrothal to another, Florence should never become his wife.

An infidel, to the world in bold arrogance confessed, who could trust to his keeping the sacredness of human love ? No suspicion of this had ever previously crossed me ; for, though he had professed neither faith nor creed, I had never heard him scoff at that religion which in his daily communion with the family at Glenary he knew to be revered by them.

When I went to seek Florence, I found her sitting alone and in darkness. I went close to her side ; bent down and kissed her. Her cheek was wet with tears ; she wound her arms about my neck, and whispered,

“ I am very miserable ! ”

“ I know it, dear Florence ; and I have come to you uncalled to try and comfort you,” I said. Then I vainly strove to explain to her more fully the position in which her waywardness must place her ; the verge of the precipice from which one hasty step would precipitate her into an abyss of moral suffering. I besought her to pause, — to pray to God for strength to do what conscience told her was her duty in His eyes.

“ It is too late ; I have no power, no right, now to retract,” she answered.

“ Is it ever too late, dear Florence, to do that which we

know to be right? And, now that you know him to be unworthy of your love, will that love not pass away?"

"Never!" answered the same low, unfaltering voice, — "never! I do not believe him unworthy; and even though I did, I would not, could not change."

"Florence," I continued, for I could not bear to see her thus recklessly rushing to destruction, — "Florence, do you know that he professes to recognize no will mightier than his own? — professes, I say, for how can a mortal being, endowed with reason and ordinary intellect, look abroad upon this world, and recognize no guiding hand? There must be moments, even in his wilful blindness, when his quickened pulse, his throbbing heart, must whisper him of a mightier power than his!"

"I will win him to faith in God, — to a belief in the Divinity!" answered the unwavering voice.

"Ah, Florence! think you a frail waif of humanity, like you, can convince him of error, when the never-silent voice of nature is calling him in the rushing of waters, the fragrance of flowers, the deepening clouds and dawning day, the surging tide of human life ebbing from new-born existence to death's mystery, and still his sight is visionless, his ear deaf? Think you that love, wild, passionate and all-engrossing as it may now be, will endure when the beauty which it worships fades? Will he behold the pure heart, the immortal, ripening into more radiant charm with the decay of your material being? Should your impulsive heart, the poetry of your youth, be lost in sorrow, the color fade from your cheek, your eye dim with suffering, would he not turn from you as from a flower bereft of its fragrance and beauty? O, believe me, there is no true and holy love without deep and steadfast faith and principle, to sustain and strengthen the human heart in life's manifold trials."

When I paused she shook her head, with a sweet, trusting smile on her lips, as she reiterated her faith in her power

and in his love. There was too much of passion mingling in Florence Vassal's affection for Harry Cunningham, even had it been legitimate in its abandonment. She made an idol in the place of Him who has said there shall be no idols.

The day was just breaking the following morning, when I was aroused by tidings of Mrs. Vassal's illness. Annie was bending over me with tears in her eyes, and sobbing violently. By a dim, uncertain light I hurried to the sick room. The family physician was coming out as I entered, and I overheard him pronounce her ill in the extreme. She lay with closed eyes, white as the pillow beneath her head. She was suffering from a violent hemorrhage; and she was too slight and frail, from long illness, to struggle against it.

By her mother's side Annie Vassal grew calm, and watchful of her every want. Now the beautiful resignation, the heroic fortitude, of which that still, passive being was capable, became apparent.

"Mamma, mamma!" all at once broke upon the silence, in a voice of terror; and, looking around, we beheld Florence in her dressing-gown before us. "Mamma!" and with her child's voice the mother's eyes unclosed. She strove to smile upon her. "My own dear mamma!" and she bent down and pressed her lips fondly and passionately to her mother's cold cheek.

Vivid now was the contrast between the eldest born and the youngest child; — the one, meek and shy as a little child in life's hours of sunshine, grew all at once, in the murky atmosphere of fear, into a strong-hearted, enduring woman; while the brilliant, impetuous Florence yielded at once to the bitter grief which that hour impressed on all our hearts.

"You must not excite her, Florence!" said Mr. Vassal, drawing her from her mother's side. She turned her glance towards him, shuddered slightly, and stepped back. That glance struck to the very heart of her father. I could per-

ceive it by the sudden quiver of his lip, and the pressure of his hand to his heart.

Slowly and sadly the day wore away ; silent and tearful we watched beside the sufferer. Unbroken quiet was ordered, and Florence and myself, as the time passed without any change in the invalid, went into the next room. No hand but Annie's raised the glass to her mother's lips ; none but herself smoothed her pillow ; and that gentle hand never once faltered weakly in its duty, although Annie Vassal's most beloved friend was evidently passing away forever.

For the first time Florence lay weeping without restraint on the sofa ; and, with my head bowed to the sill of the open window, I watched the daylight fading, when I heard a step in the hall, the door opened noiselessly, and Herbert Manners came in.

He approached Florence sadly and pityingly, sat down upon the sofa by her side, and whispered her name. She uncovered her face, and looked wildly upon him.

"Have you come, too ?" she said, turning away, as though she could not bear to look upon him in her grief. But he did not comprehend her ; he little knew that his presence only added to her sorrow.

Just then the door opened, and Annie stood on the threshold.

"Mamma," she said, "is awake, and has asked for you all."

Florence arose, and Herbert drew her hand in his arm, for she trembled so she could scarcely stand.

"Try and control yourself, darling Florence, for her sake," entreated Annie, and we went in.

The sick one's glance rested on the door, and she smiled faintly when she beheld Herbert Manners.

"I have sent for you, my child, to tell you how much happiness it gives me to leave you to one like Herbert ; how much easier you have made this parting to me, now that you

are the promised wife of one to whom I may safely trust the welfare of my precious child." Florence looked up as though she would fain reply; but, as her eye fell upon that placid countenance, with the memory of Harry Cunningham intruding even there, came the recollection of her mother's life-long affection, and the words died unspoken upon her lips. "And you will be faithful, — true to him, as he to you, Florence, my child!"

"Ever, mamma!" she answered, in a faint, low voice, half unconscious of her own words, for her glance was on that face before her. But others heard them then, and forgot them not.

Florence felt the hand which the dying woman clasped placed within that of Herbert Manners; felt the warm pressure of his fingers about her own, and listened to the low blessing pronounced upon both, powerless to move, with no voice to speak; felt the arm of Herbert lift her from where she knelt, heard his voice whispering words of comfort in her ear. And, lo! between herself and that death-bed rose the vision of Harry Cunningham, whispering, "Mine ever, Florence Vassal!"

The forms about her grew faint and indistinct; she saw us not as we gathered about the dying, when the calm voice of the venerable clergyman arose, saying, "He who has given has taken away! Blessed be his holy name!"

But when he paused, she raised her head, gave one long, despairing glance at the still face before her, and fell unconscious on the arm of Herbert.

Annie Vassal's hand smoothed her mother's dark hair above the faded brow; and then she laid her cheek beside the dead, while, for the first time, the brave young heart yielded to its agony.

The morning of the funeral came, and Florence and myself stood within the darkened chamber gazing on the dead. Softly through the closed casement came the song of birds,

the hum of the dawning day ! Without was life and light ; within, darkness and death. In silent rest lay the dead, a smile of peace upon her lip. With pallid cheeks and drooping eyelids stood the living.

“Mamma, mamma !” murmured Florence, in a voice of terrible anguish ; and, for the first time in life, there was no mother’s voice of answering love to soothe her to rest ; and Florence bowed her face, while no ray of light, no trust in heavenly love, illumined the human heart, now shrouded in the darkness of utter desolation.

As she knelt there, the door opened, and the slight, childish figure of Annie glided in, with a handful of fresh flowers.

With reverent tenderness she pressed her lips on her mother’s brow, and wound the fair blossoms into a garland which she placed upon the still bosom before her ; while tears soft and warm, the heart’s dew, fell glittering amid their leaves. Then the little hands were meekly folded, the tearful eyes raised in prayer. And Florence looked upon the youthful countenance beaming with tender resignation to God’s will, as through the shrouded casement there stole a beam of morning light, resting upon the brow of Annie Vassal ; and, wondering at the blessed peace which filled her sister’s heart, hearkened to the simple prayer of “Not my will, O God ! but thine, be done !”

Very wearily passed the week which succeeded Mrs. Vassal’s death. Florence remained in her chamber, shunning all society ; and each day the color faded from her cheek, and the usual light footstep grew heavier and heavier. Herbert’s glance would follow her with anxious solicitude ; and more than once his lip trembled with emotion, as she turned coldly from him.

One morning, as I sat alone in the embrasure of the library window, Herbert came in, and, drawing a seat to the table in the centre of the room, he bowed his face upon his hands, and as unseen I looked at him, I beheld a tear start

through his fingers and drop to the table. I would have gladly striven to have comforted him, but I did not like to intrude on his grief. Just then a step paused in the hall ; then the door opened, and Florence stood on the threshold in her black dress, looking very thin and pale ; and there was, moreover, an expression of suffering in those beautiful eyes, very painful to behold. She paused and hesitated when her glance rested on Herbert ; but he arose and placed a chair before him, and with downcast eyes she approached and took it. There followed a moment's silence, during which he sat earnestly regarding the changing color of her cheek.

"Florence," he questioned, "do you love me?"

She did not answer him, but her lips quivered, and she leaned heavily against the table for support ; and once more he spoke.

"Florence, is there another whom you love better than you do me?"

A crimson glow swept over the girl's face, the drooping eyelids trembled, and tears broke out and fell upon her cheek.

"I will leave you!" he said. "You are free as when we first met! God bless you, Florence Vassal, and farewell!"

How strangely calm his tones! She raised her eyes to his, while a soft, warm smile of gratitude stole to her lip ; but it faded with its birth. The countenance before her could not hide the anguish of his soul ; it had nothing of the composure of his voice. The generous, manly spirit hushed to silence the despairing cry of his wrung heart, but every lineament was eloquent with grief.

"Herbert!" she said, sorrowfully holding out her hand. He clasped it for a brief instant in his own ; the next, and Herbert Manners had parted forever from Florence Vassal. And with that pressure passed the sunshine and peace of her life.

"You are getting thinner and paler each day, my child!" said Mr. Vassal, rising and approaching Florence as she

stood one morning leaning against the casement, the light falling aslant her countenance. As he spoke, he laid his hand gently on that drooping head.

Grief had wrought deep ravages in the beauty and radiance of Florence's face. The features were sharp and wan ; and the bright eyes had grown dim and mournful.

Herbert Manners had shielded Florence from all censure, with the same generous spirit which he had manifested in parting from her ; and the father never chided or reproached his wayward child. But I could see how painfully his heart was wrung when she shrank away from the hand which would have rested in blessing on her head ; and, for some moments, he watched her in silence.

" Florence," he said, at last, and a strange, stern expression settled down upon those usually gentle and placid features, — " Florence, a father cannot, with iron will, crush his child's heart. Time will not soften the obduracy which even the shadow of death has failed to dispel. The promise given your dying mother has been forgotten. This morning I have received another communication from Mr. Cunningham ; answer it as conscience and your own feelings dictate." And he placed a letter in her hand. " I will no longer thwart your will, Florence ; you are free to choose between us ; and a lasting choice it must be, for the wife of Harry Cunningham leaves my heart and hearth ;" and with folded arms, and stern bearing, he stood waiting her words.

One word might, perchance, even then have saved Florence Vassal, — one word of tenderness, — as she stood there before us, trembling and fearing, doubting and loving ; but I could not speak, and the father's pride now held him mute.

The troubled glance wandered around, and fell upon the letter in her hand ; then a warm, life-like hue spread over her face.

" Mr. Cunningham, or myself ?" said Mr. Vassal.

“ Harry ! ” she almost whispered, and buried her face in her hands.

Nearly an hour afterwards, when I entered the room, she was reading the letter which she had written to Harry Cunningham, and weeping in all the abandonment of mingled joy and sorrow ; but when her glance lingered on the last line, a smile so warm and bright, a blush so vivid, stole over her countenance, that no words were required to tell me its import. She folded it with a strange composure of manner, very unlike her previous agitation ; and Florence Vassal’s eye again grew bright, her spirit buoyant, but for passing moments, which stole over her like clouds on the horizon of summer.

On a glorious autumn morning Florence became the wife of Harry Cunningham. The drawing-room was flooded, during the bridal hour, with the bright light of a cloudless sun ; but, as the words which sealed her earthly destiny were spoken, a cloud swept over the face of heaven ; it just veiled the face of the bride with its gloom, and once more the sunshine fell warm about her ; but the gloom lingered in other hearts, growing more palpable with the passage of time.

“ Remember, Florence, that when he for whose sake you have deserted all others deserts you in his turn, a father’s house and heart is open to you. Until then, farewell ! ” said Mr. Vassal, as, for the first time for many weeks, she wound her arms about him. With his first words Florence dried her tears, and stood erect ; when he ceased, she turned coldly from his side, gave her husband her hand on his approach, and smiled fondly and trustingly on him, as he placed her in the carriage.

We caught but a glimpse of a white face as the carriage drove off ; the next moment it was buried on the shoulder of Harry Cunningham, and Florence had left Glenary.

She beheld not the heavy tears which chased each other down her father’s cheek ; she realized not the gloom which filled the home which she left,

CHAPTER II.

" I mourn thee not ! life had no lore,
 Thy soul in Morphean dens to steep,
 Love's lost nepenthe to restore,
 Or bid the avenging sorrow sleep."

Immediately after his marriage, Harry Cunningham took his wife abroad.

Florence wrote home very often ; and her letters were long, and evidently written by a spirit full of love and happiness, — a spirit unclouded by aught but home memories.

For more than two years they remained absent, and in the interval Florence became a mother. Her own eloquent pen could scarce portray her joy and pride when she spoke of her beautiful boy, — her little Harry. " He has his father's dark eyes, and the sweet smile of my own father," she wrote ; " and I tremble, as he grows in loveliness each day, lest he be taken to heaven, as a flower too fair to blossom on earth. I would never leave him ; I would watch his cradle slumbers, trust him to no other care. But we are in Paris, and it is Harry's pleasure that I should not confine myself to nursery duties ; it seems strange that so fond a mother should be as dissipated as I am. I often come home, faint and weary, with Harry, from some gay scene, to wake my boy for a kiss before I rest. Once, after coming home at a late hour, I went to him in my evening dress, and sat down to watch him sleeping. I was very weary, and I too fell asleep. When Harry returned he found me there, professed himself angry, and has since attributed my pale cheeks to the nursery watch. I am weary of Paris, longing to show you my little bud."

After the above, Florence's letters became less frequent and very brief. She no longer spoke of her husband ; but she wrote with fond enthusiasm of her child, and in her love for him we recognized the same idolatrous affection which she had bestowed on his father.

A little while longer, and there was a vague rumor of an estrangement between Harry Cunningham and his beautiful wife; but I could scarce credit it.

Then Florence wrote to me. They were coming back. Soon after receiving her letter, I went to New York. The first night I attended the opera. I had but just taken my seat, when, in answer to an inquiry from another, a gentleman answered, "It is the beautiful Mrs. Cunningham."

I followed the direction of his glance, and my eye fell on Florence.

Yes, there she sat; the fair girlish being, who I had last beheld a bride, had matured into a gloriously-beautiful woman. Radiant in her rich evening toilet, she was before me. There was the same young head which I had last beheld drooping in grief and shame upon the bosom of him who had won her to break her faith to the good and true, to desert in rebellious waywardness those who had cherished her; the same dark eyes, almost fearfully bright, which had smiled through a mist of tears when the father last looked upon his perjured child, in the sore agony of helpless despair, — the bride of a profligate!

As I watched her I saw that she was regarding, with earnest scrutiny, some person on the opposite side of the house; and, following her glance, I beheld Harry Cunningham. But, alas! no answering smile of love now sought the eyes which grew so mournful as they rested on his face.

He was bending over a dark-haired woman, who rested on the crimson cushions with an air of superb repose, drinking in the whispered words which fell from his lips. I perceived at once that she was a foreigner, and a woman of exceeding beauty. There was burning passion in the eyes which sought her own; but those fringed lids drooped not, neither did the crimson deepen on her cheeks. It was an every-day tale with the sensual Italian, and that very repose of manner betrayed the spirit within to Harry Cunningham; and still he smiled

and murmured in her ear, while that mournful glance rested on him.

More beautiful than in other days was Florence; but fearful even in its beauty was the crimson flush on her cheek. It was not the glow of perfect health, not mere joy and love; had it been, it would have deepened and paled alternately. It was the fever flush of mental suffering. One could see it by the quivering of the lips, as, with a vain effort to smile, she looked on the group gathered about her; while in the light, rich and bright as that of the mid-day sun, the jewels woven in her braided hair glittered above the throbbing brain and beating heart.

After a while the lashes drooped low over those wild, sad eyes; and, shading her face with her fan, she leant wearily back. And so the evening wore on, while she sat with drooping head, neither listening to the rich music sweeping up to the vaulted ceiling, or to the words of those who toyed with the rare blossoms of her bouquet, mingling their fragrance with the perfumed air, as it lay unheeded by her side.

I alone, of the many gathered there that night, as I gazed on her, knew that love was wrestling with her pride; that her life-hopes were withering like the flowers she held in that wilderness of light and gayety.

The evening was wearing away, when a footman appeared in the box of Mrs. Cunningham, who bent down and told her that which caused her to spring up with clasped hands, and very pale, while again her glance turned towards her husband. He was bending forward, gazing into the Italian's face; and Florence sent the man round to him, while a gentleman folded her cloak about her. Beautiful almost beyond a being of earth she looked, as she stood there, in utter unconsciousness of the many eyes turned towards her, — her glance bent on her husband. He looked over towards her when the man delivered his message, and appeared annoyed by the attention which she was attracting; and I

fancied, by the curl of his lip, that his answer to her was bitter and unkind ; and once more he turned to his companion, and gathered a flower from her bouquet.

She at once turned to go. I met her in the lobby, and she recognized me at once ; but she betrayed neither surprise or emotion at the meeting. She was engrossed in one fear. Her child was ill ; they had sent for her.

I accompanied her home, and strove to reässure her ; but it was useless. She sprang from the carriage the moment it drew up before her door, and, with reckless haste, ran up the marble steps, through the broad hall.

The soft carpet gave back no echo to that flying step. All was silent ; but when we gained the upper hall there came through a half-open door a hoarse, suffocating cry. It was from her child's nursery ; and the nurse, with several of the domestics, stood grouped about his little bed, with anxious, terrified countenances.

"Mamma, mamma !" murmured the sufferer, in tones scarcely audible, stretching out his little arms, as she appeared.

"My darling, my darling !" and Florence lifted him in her arms. His face was crimson, his limbs moved convulsively ; but he laid his head on his mother's breast, as though nothing could harm him there.

"Has no one gone for a physician ?" I asked ; but while I spoke, one entered.

The child lay gasping and choking on his mother's bosom.

"Save him, save him ! O God, he is my all !" and Florence laid her boy back on his pillow, and fixed her gaze upon the doctor with frantic entreaty. But even as she prayed there came a fierce, convulsive struggle. "Mamma !" he moaned, in scarce distinguishable tones. The beautiful eyes wandered to his mother's face with an expression of terrible pain ; then he lay calm and still, while a sweet smile stole to his breathless lips. She bowed her face to his ;

when she raised it, her darling was dead ! Florence laid her jewelled hand on the golden curls clustering about the white forehead of her gloriously beautiful boy, and a breathless silence fell over that luxurious chamber. It was broken by a heavy footstep coming slowly through the hall. It paused before the door, and Harry Cunningham entered, his cheek flushed with wine, his brow darkened by a frown.

I drew back within the shadow of the curtains, and all gave way as he came forward close to his wife's side, while she stood like a statue by the dead.

"O God ! my boy ! Harry, Harry !" burst from his lip. In his hour of misery he called upon his Maker's name. No words can portray the agony of that voice ; but that which answered him was more terrible in its unnatural composure.

"Dead ! dead ! Harry Cunningham ! My child will never wake again. He sleeps his last sleep ! he smiles his last smile ! and it is mine,—he is all mine !" and she laid her cheek to that of the dead boy, and wound her arms about him.

"Florence !" and, with his own face fearfully white and wan, her husband laid his hand on her head ; but she moaned and shrank from his touch, and he turned away and hid his face.

All through that fearful night Florence watched beside the dead ; her own hands folded the little robe about those rigid limbs, smoothed the bright curls, and laid her boy to rest ; and there the morning dawned upon her in her crushed evening dress, jewels still woven in her hair. But no word was spoken between us ; no tears came to moisten her strained and burning eyes.

With the first gray light of early day her husband stood by her side. One cold hand lay listless on her knee, and he took it within his. She strove to rise, but she had no strength ; and, looking up to him, she spoke :

“ Harry, we must part ; I must leave you ! ”

“ Part, Florence ! ”

“ Suffer me to go home ! ” she said, pleadingly ; — “ home to die ! And our child, I would bury him at Glenary, where they will lay me too by his side.”

“ Florence ! ” said her husband, in horror-stricken accents, “ Florence, my beloved, my wife, hear me ! ” and he would have taken her to his bosom ; but she shrank aside, answering :

“ Not your wife ! You have broken the vows which made me such. Not your beloved ! You never loved me, Harry Cunningham, or not thus had you wrung a heart which has clung to you ! I, too, have been a false and sinful woman, or I were not now looking on this dead boy, — upon your child and mine ! The memory of the past is with me ; and terrible is the retribution, but most just ! I have sinned, and fearful is my punishment ! ” [Alas, Florence ! even then you were more grievously in your blindness when you spoke of parting than you had ever been before. The sacredness of your marriage vows, with the obligation which they imposed to remain with your husband “ until death do us part,” was forgotten.] “ Will you not be merciful to me ? ” she continued. “ May I not take my dead boy and go back to Glenary ? ”

“ Florence ! Florence ! ” he answered, in the same horror-stricken tones. I did not think she could resist him ; but she did not waver.

“ May I go, Harry ? ”

“ Do you no longer love me, Florence ? ” — and he looked wistfully upon her.

“ Mock me not with words and tones of affection ! My heart is broken ! Mock it not, Harry Cunningham ! ”

When she ceased, he bent down and kissed his boy's cold cheek ; and there, by the dead, they parted, husband and wife !

Once more Florence was at Glenary; and in the old church-yard lay her child, with the sunshine peering through the drooping willows, making the early violets to bloom upon his grave.

Each day, when the sun set, with slow and faltering step Florence sought that quiet spot, there to linger an hour away. But each day her step grew slower and heavier, her cheek more and more transparent; and those who had known the gay Florence of other days turned aside to hide a starting tear, as their minds swept back the shrouding veil, and they looked on that faded face, so lovely even in its grief.

Slowly passed the spring-time. Then June came, with its roses and its warm breezes; but the soft air bore no balm for the broken heart. She had made an idol, and in her madness bowed before it in delirious worship; but, now that that idol had fallen,—now that the veil was lifted which had so long shrouded her vision,—she turned, in the utter desolation of her soul, to her God. Remorse was busy at her heart. The memory of broken vows was with her. You could perceive it in the wild, startled expression that flitted over her countenance even in her dreams. But a long time passed before she found courage to express the grief which oppressed her.

The summer was in its glory, and the scorching sun of August had not parched the green fields or withered the fairest of the summer's flowers, when Florence, leaning heavily on her father's arm, entered the little parlor which had formerly been her mother's favorite apartment. She was weaker, sadder, that day, than usual; and her strength barely sufficed to bear her to the sofa.

With all the gentle care of affection, Mr. Vassal arranged the cushions beneath her head, and sat down by her side. Through the open window came the warm evening breeze, and stirred the dark curls of her luxuriant hair. By and by an

expression of perfect repose stole over her thin, white face, and we perceived that she slept.

"I have been dreaming of mamma," she said, in a low voice, when she awoke. "I fancied she was sitting here by my side, and that she was grave and sad. 'Florence, what are you doing here? Why are you alone?' she asked.

"Father, it was not mamma's voice that I heard; it was the voice of my heavenly Father, which has been long reminding his wayward child of her duty. I must heed the warning, for life is growing brief. Death looks very near to me to-night, as I lay here, weak and helpless as a little child. Father, I cannot go to *him*! — may *he* not come to me?"

"As you will, darling!" answered Mr. Vassal; and Florence lifted her grateful face to his with the caress of childhood.

With flushed cheek and burning eyes, too weak to rise, Florence lay upon a couch, waiting with hushed breath the coming of Harry Cunningham. With quivering lips she murmured his name, as he crossed the threshold of the chamber and sprang hurriedly to her side.

"Have you come, my own Harry?" and, with a faint yet joyful cry, she wound her arms about him.

"I could not die, beloved, until you had blessed and forgiven the wife who deserted you."

"Die, darling! You shall not; you cannot leave me!" But Florence's voice, sad and low, rebuked him.

"Hush, beloved! hush, Harry! We must not rebel against God's will; and it is his will that we now part!" And, as Harry Cunningham looked upon the wan and faded countenance before him, a startled expression flitted over his face, with the dread conviction, which settled down into an expression of utter hopelessness.

Harry Cunningham had been but a little while at Glenary,

when, one autumn morning, I entered Florence's chamber with a few late summer flowers. She was sitting in an easy-chair before the window, a dressing-gown folded about her wasted form, and a soft morning light fell through the curtain and rested upon her head. She was very pale, and the heavy lashes drooped low upon her cheek.

There was an expression of touching humility in the slight, bowed figure; and over the meek, wan face flitted a smile of hope and faith, as the words which fell from her husband's lips broke on her ear. In deep, impressive accents, Harry Cunningham, seated before her, read from the Scriptures.

The soul of the defiant man was shaken. Purified by suffering, Florence lingered, bearing to him light from heaven. The bright beam of divine faith had penetrated the innermost depths of a soul hitherto shrouded in gloom. The voice of his Creator had pierced the deafness of his ear in the raging of the life-tempest; and it spoke of peace to the weary, forgiveness to all sin.

He had looked upon his beautiful boy as he lay cold and still in death, stricken in all his glorious promise; and the eye of the unbeliever could not pierce the grave and behold his child an angel in Paradise. No! To him there was no blessed reunion; with him death was the victor, and his glance saw but the perishing clay in the dreary grave, and beheld only the beauty there fading. Then memory bore him back to his lone home; and where was she who had poured forth, in all the prodigality of a generous spirit, the priceless treasures of her heart,—those treasures which he had accepted but to cast them idly away! And now, when his silent home gave back no echo to his voice, how dark and drear was life! Then the voice of undying tenderness summoned him to her side; and when he looked upon her, smiling with ineffable love upon him still, while Death's shadow fell over her, and its cold hand led her slowly from his presence, then the spirit, which had before been but shaken, was over-

thrown ; and Harry Cunningham bowed down by his perishing idol's side, and prayed to his God for mercy, in the helplessness of suffering. And mercy was vouchsafed to the erring and the penitent. With half her being already in heaven with God and her child, Florence lingered, striving ever to enlighten and comfort the tortured heart upon which remorse had laid its iron hand.

"Come unto me, all ye that are heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."—Harry Cunningham's voice was low and tremulous, and he bowed his head upon his hand.

They did not notice me, and, placing the flowers in a vase, I turned to go, when I looked at Florence. She was holding out her hand, with a wandering, uncertain movement, towards her husband ; and I saw that the color was gone from her cheek and lip.

"I cannot see you, Harry ! It is dark, and very cold !" fell upon our ears. The next moment she lay in his arms, breathing very low and fast, her head upon his shoulder.

"Call them ! She is dying !" he said, in a hoarse voice ; but as he spoke they entered.

"Florence, love, do you know me ?" said her father, bending down his lips to her cheek.

"Hold me close, closer to you, Harry ! I see him now, my boy ! my darling ! standing with the angels in heaven !" were her last words. One moment her glance wandered around the apartment, then rested on her husband's face. She smiled a faint, blissful smile, but no more removed her gaze from his features. The breath came fainter and fainter, lingered with a low, indistinct murmur upon her lips, and then was hushed forever !

With Florence's last breath a sunbeam broke through the foliage of the trees waving their boughs against the window, and flooded the chamber with a golden light, illuming that still, white face with angelic beauty.

No tear dimmed the dark eye of Harry Cunningham as he

looked upon his young wife, sinking into dreamless rest upon his bosom ; but the lips which lingered so long on her own were cold and white as those of the dead. The strife of life was over, the broken heart at rest ; and he who had made the ruin bowed by its side in penitent prayer !

Long years have passed since they laid her in the church-yard by her child, where flowers still bloom above their grave, and a single willow waves above them.

Time has lifted the shadow which so long lay heavy on Glenary and its inmates.

Herbert Manners, when he heard of Florence's death, hastened to weep over the grave of his buried love. Annie Vassal, with her dark eyes eloquent with emotion, and her placid features lighted by a gentle smile of welcome, held forth her hand to the lonely student, whose heart thrilled as in other days when he listened to her voice, and beat ever quicker, until at the marriage altar its calm, low accents lulled him into holy peace evermore.

In the neighborhood of Glenary Harry Cunningham has built him a beautiful Italian-like villa, and from the old drawing-room windows you can see its white walls. Each day a slender figure bounds down the avenue leading thither from the old gray house ; and each day Harry Cunningham is seen upon the piazza, prepared to meet and welcome his expected guest.

" Florence, my darling," he will say, with a voice of love ; and Annie's daughter, tossing back her rich, dark curls, will smile upon him his own dead wife's sunny smile. Then, hand in hand, they pass on to the church-yard, gathering flowers as they go, to lay on the graves of the dead !

LOVE.

I THOUGHT that Love was dead ; my heart his grave ;
Enfolded in the pall of stricken hopes,
And strewn with memories too sad to save.

Upon his breast those mystic flowers that ope
In the dark night I pressed with tender care,
And flecked with evergreens and immortelles
The quenchless glory of his golden hair ;
But yet he slumbered, heeding not their spells.

Then I wept over him such tears as fall
From the dew-laden lids of early Spring,
When, tremulous with woe, we hear her call
Soft whispering breezes and bright beams to bring
To the lorn earth new fragrance and new bloom,
Watching all prayerfully his closed eyes
For such faint, violet flushings as illumine
Her slow awakening from Death's disguise.

Still, pale and motionless, he lay ; no thrill
Answered the fervor of my fond caress,
As, with a wild and sorrow-frenzied will,
I whispered o'er old words of tenderness.
Like the soft light of morning on the snow,
In roseate hues upon that cold, wan brow
Fell the warm coloring of my own heart's glow ;
But the chill lips gave back no echoing vow.

Alone ! I cried, in my great misery,
But for this fearful burden that I bear,
This palsied joy, this frigid mystery ;
Answer me, Father, — thou that hearest prayer ! —
If thou canst hear, in this dead atmosphere —
Is there no solace for a woe like mine,
From the cold phantom that has lured me here ?
Weary and worn, I seek thy love divine.

A murmur like the far, tumultuous throe
Of prisoned waves that struggle to be free,
Bound by stern cerements of ice and snow
'Neath the chill bosom of an Arctic sea,
Rippled the silence of that tranced air ;
The blanched lips quivered, that so long had lain
Still to the passion of my earthly prayer,
And the low music woke to a triumphal strain.

Through the cold cerements, so tightly pressed
Over the stainless whiteness of that form,
Clasping their darkness close about his breast,
Shone, soft as stars that tremble through the storm,
Faint, silvery gleams, with that sweet music's swell
Kindling and deepening, till their glowing light
Melted the darkness, like a holy spell,
That veiled the pallid sleeper from my sight.

Smiling upon me, through the ambient air,
He woke once more, my beautiful, mine own ;
A halo raying from his golden hair.
Upon his breast, for flowers, my hand had strewn
Lilies of light, and buds of amaranth bloom.
O, sorrowing heart, pure love shall conquer death !
Then, when the heavy shroud of earthly gloom
Stifles its pulse, lift it to God for breath.

THE PRIMA DONNA;

OR, MISTS OF THE SPIRIT.

“——— Be thou still!

Enough to know is given ;

Clouds, winds and stars, *their* part fulfil, —

Thine is to trust in Heaven.”

“HA ! ha ! ha !” What a merry laugh it was ! How joyous and care-free it rang out upon the summer air, from the brow of a cliff overlooking Newport beach, where gathered the crowd of bathers for their morning bath ! “Ha ! ha ! ha !” and again it rang free and clear, as a young face bent down over the very verge of the cliff, where the untrodden grass, raising itself, concealed all but the dark, beaming eyes, fair, low brow, and clustering curls, of a face, whether belonging to a boy or girl, it was difficult for the cause of all that merriment to decide, save by the wave of a blue sash pennon-like on the wind. Boyhood, however, boasts of no signal so graceful ; and the gazer forgot the white spray which dashed so maliciously over him, as he stood on the rocks below, with his cane, reed-like, but for its golden handle and quaint device, toying with the floating sea-weed and tossing shells.

The fog, which had hung heavily all the morning over the beach, was rising, as the meridian rays of an August sun took the azure fields of heaven.

“Fair Maid of the Mist,” commenced the youth, doffing his white Panama, as the blue signal swelled on the breeze ; but, ere he could conclude the apostrophe which he had begun,

down came a whole shower of golden buttercups, from the little white hand above, upon his upraised countenance, and once more the wild "ha! ha!" as the recumbent figure rose erect, and sprang away, with flying step, followed by Brian Vernon, in eager pursuit.

On, onward sped Brian over the broad field, peering over rocks and walls, while, all the time, the object of his boy-like chase crouched silently in the shadow of a clump of wild rose-trees, her earnest gaze, with a half-frightened, half-laughing expression, bent upon him. But the carriages were rolling back from the beach, and Brian Vernon paused so close to the tall rose-tree, that the breeze which lifted the soft hair from his brow was laden with the fragrance of the budding flowers thereon. For a moment or more he stood there erect, his hat off, while with his handkerchief he brushed away the heavy drops of perspiration standing bead-like on his brow. Yet something there was in the soft, dreamy eloquence of those dark hazel eyes, which fascinated the young girl, and which afterwards made her unheeding of Nurse Cathy's "O, Miss Joya! look at the pretty muslin all grass-stained!"

"Hush, Cathy, hush! don't scold, -- it will put it all out of my head; and I don't wish, Cathy, to forget it, -- it was so very funny!" And then she went on to tell how she was sitting on the cliff, while mamma was bathing; how a gentleman, too, was sitting on the rocks below, watching the dancing waves, until one, at length, rolled so suddenly and maliciously over him as to make her laugh aloud; but she omitted the shower of buttercups, and the subsequent chase in the fields, for she feared that Cathy -- the grave, decorous Cathy -- might chide her.

But when Mrs. Allison entered her child's room that evening to give her the good-night kiss, ere she slept, and she herself joined the crowd below, Joya wound her arm about her mother's neck; who, heedless of the crushed folds of the

rich evening dress, remained quietly upon the low couch as the child spoke in the sweet, low tones so dear to her ear.

"I could not sleep, mamma, without telling you all about it, — it was so droll, was it not?" she questioned, after relating the adventures of the morning. "But what did he mean by speaking to me? Don't you think I am tall enough for people to be a little polite to me, as they are to you?" And she bent her head backward with a certain proud grace, that was wont, years afterwards, to send a deeper thrill through other hearts than that of her fond mother. And yet Joya Allison was not what the world calls beautiful. Her mouth was too wide, though the lips were richly colored, the smile that wreathed them full of the spirit's sunshine; her cheek was pale, when no emotion awoke the electric life-current within; but her dark, rich curls, brilliant eyes, and bird-like grace of gesture, were fascinating in the extreme. A stranger could not appreciate her loveliness; only when that heart-smile beamed upon her lip, and she was speaking in accents tuned to the harmony of the pure, high spirit within, could any one have a true perception of her character.

"But an't *you* too tall to shower buttercups on a stranger?" answered the mother, in slight accents of rebuke.

"He did not look like a stranger. His eyes are like your own, only more earnest like. Perhaps, mamma, we knew each other before we came to live in this world, and I remember him."

There was ever a maturity of thought in the girl's fancies, which would have fallen oddly on a stranger's ear; but Mrs. Allison was wont to listen to the strange, mysterious feelings woven into words, as they swept over the imagination of the child. She deemed it well to welcome and receive her confidence. She loved, moreover, to listen to her thus, in the quietude of the evening, as she lay upon her pillow, building airy castles; it amused and interested her; and she encouraged the child in the spirit-weavings, for in the frail woof she

wove many a glittering golden thread. She forgot that with the poetry of these unchild-like reveries there was blent much that was perilous to the future serenity of the young dreamer. She was not growing up to womanhood in the healthful quietude of serene childhood, her spirit strengthening in sunshine, to bear the after storms of maturer life. She was weaving a link between herself and the spirit world, not of sweet, confiding prayer, but all imaginative, — brilliant for the fleeting hour, — but a thread of doubt and gloom, perchance, for future years. With the impetuosity of an impassioned temperament she was plunging into the dim mysteries which unsettle even the brain of age.

Her dark eyes had been wont to dilate, from early childhood, when seated quietly for hours on old Cathy's knee, listening to the low, awe-struck tone, breathing of white-robed forms, gliding through the darkness of eve, or angel faces holding watch over sleeping childhood. But the mother was young and thoughtless, mingling much in the world's gay scenes; her intense affection for her only child alone winning her from its festivities. Even now the music of the band below was stealing on her ear, calling her to the fluttering crowd in the gay saloon; but she lingered long, listening to Joya, smoothing her dark curls, and answering her with loving words.

It was the girl's twelfth birth-day, and the mother, glancing hopefully down the shadowy aisles of futurity, pictured the destiny of the favored child of love and affluence. Soft, serene, was that summer night. "Was it a bright prophecy of the future?" the mother, with almost tearful eyes, questioned of silence, as the child sank asleep, and the waves of the ocean murmured sullenly in the distance.

"Ha! ha! ha!" Five years ago that August morning, rang out that same silvery laugh at Newport, only louder, more deep-toned and musical. A slight, dark girl, in a black

habit, beaver hat and shadowy plume, stands upon the piazza of the Ocean House. She has just sprung from the saddle, and the servant leads away the spirited and beautiful horse which has been caracoling for hours beneath its graceful and fearless rider, where the white spray glitters in the soft, warm sunlight lying on Newport beach. There are many watching her every movement ; for Joya Allison is the belle of the season. Other stars grew dim at her appearing, and, as fades the evening light before the orb of day, so paled the beauty of the late reigning belle, Ellen Ballou, when, at a late hour, one July night, Joya Allison entered the saloon of the Ocean House, the glow deep upon her cheek, and light radiating from her eyes. The white folds of her costly brocade swept the flower-woven carpet, and jewels glittered in the soft, clustering curls. The brilliancy of her loveliness, all joyous and full of exuberant life as then, won the casual glance ; the heart-smile flitting over those fair features attracted the lengthened gaze ; while the brilliant repartee, coming from those lips, chained the fancy, speaking her no fleeting, evanescent flower, but an enduring remembrance, which would linger in the heart when the shadow of her absence was upon it.

As Joya's laugh fell upon the ear, a gentleman reading within an apartment opening upon the piazza arose, and looked through the blinds which concealed him from view. He had that morning arrived at the hotel, and already the attractions of the belle had been discussed in his hearing. Therefore, there was much of curiosity in his glance, which deepened to admiration as he gazed ; and, pausing abruptly, he advanced hastily out into the hall to meet the object of so much attention. One gloved hand gathered up the sweeping folds of Joya's habit, and the other just touched the arm of the gentleman who accompanied her. But she glanced not up ; the long, dark lashes swept the crimsoned cheek with girlish diffidence. There was nothing of the hauteur of a successful belle ; no coquettish seeking of the admiring glances

which would fain have met her own. And he who had advanced with the rest withdrew, slightly rebuked by that feminine shrinking from the stranger's idle gaze.

"She is something more than a mere fashionable woman; there's heart and soul there!" he whispered to himself, as once more he took up the volume which he had been reading. But he no longer turned the leaves at regular intervals; he was glancing over heart-records within, where a sunny, childish brow was pictured with laughing eyes and waving curls.

Memory was leading him back, through intervening years, when, a boy-student, he had chased what seemed but a beautiful phantom of his imagination (for never since had he looked on her) over the green fields bordering the ocean, not far off.

It was Brian Vernon; and less changed by time than Joya Allison. He had become taller, more manly, but still peculiarly graceful in his bearing, — with a nervous, kindling eye, which had been otherwise soft and sad, in the extreme, in its expression.

But the morning was wearing away; as he looked up he caught a glimpse of Mrs. Ballou's carriage rolling onward to the beach, — the golden-haired heiress, folded in her mantle, resting upon the cushions, — and, drawing his hat over his brow, he went forth to join them, with the rest of the bathers, for they were old acquaintances.

Many a bright glance followed him from screening Venetian blind, and many a heart throbbed with increased emotion as he passed with soft smile and courtly brow. No human being, to have looked upon him, so graceful, so genial-looking, so serene, with a smile that would have mocked the shining summer sun, would have dreamed that he carried within him a mad, wayward, uncontrolled current of scepticism and doubt of his fellow-beings, which was to mar to him life's sunshine, as a turbulent mountain torrent sweeping through a quiet vale breaks its calm repose. That very flashing, kindling expression betrayed the want of a will which should subdue,

with its unfaltering calmness, emotions too dazzling to the casual glance in their impulsive grace of expression, but with which there mingled also too much of an atheistical doubt of that honor and goodness with which, infinitesimal as the degree may be, our Creator has endowed every immortal spirit.

The sun was piling up in the western sky, fold after fold, the gorgeous drapery it had worn during the day, while the cool sea-breeze, setting inward, imparted a delicious freshness to the air. Luxurious equipages were rolling hotel-wards, and groups clustered to gaze upon the fashion, the beauty, and the costly attire, of their occupants.

As Brian Vernon, who had been walking on the beach, drew near to the hotel, he glanced up to the upper piazza. A lady was seated there upon a low seat, only the upper portion of her face visible, as it rested upon the balustrade. A slight start, an earnest gaze into the large eyes looking down upon him, and a smile stole over his lips, a smile full of joyous exultation, as the beautiful face of Joya Allison was raised, while the sun's beams poured a halo of radiance about her. The dream of years was realized ; the phantom which had haunted his boyhood stood before him no longer visionary, but the embodiment of radiant womanhood in its earliest dawn.

The lights were extinguished in the saloon. No longer the rich melody of the far-famed band, which deep into the night had answered the ocean's murmur, went echoing on the evening breeze.

But from the casements of an apartment in the suite occupied by Mrs. Allison there yet gleamed a light, and a shadow rested on the curtain. Joya Allison was seated there alone, with the snowy folds of crape yet trembling beneath their rich embroidery which she had laid aside. So, also, had she laid aside the memory of the brilliant evening hours which had passed. The color glowed less deeply on her cheek, but the faint smile about her lip was sweeter than

when it had graced the sparkling bon-mot; for, alone in the silence of night, she was holding communion with her own spirit.

A table was drawn to her side, and a shaded lamp rested thereon, with a tall vase of Bohemian glass, full of fragrant water-lilies. But the rays from the lamp were falling over an open volume, as her pen wandered down the white page. It was the daily record of passing events, filled with the revealings of a heart peculiarly pure and sensitive.

"I am here," she wrote, "in this vast hotel, the summer home of Fashion; and, all day long, and all the night-time, the surf thunders on the beach, as in mockery of the strife, the constant murmur after supremacy, here. And now Heaven wears her jewels, while Earth's diamonds dim before their radiance. They who have toiled with intense longing to supersede all others are, in their turn, outvied. Beautiful Nature, serene in her infinite majesty, smiles calmly down upon the turbulent waves of Art. O, Fashion! thy glory is o'ershadowed, thy omnipotence is veiled! O, Wealth! could they but realize it, spirits which burn with unrest, vain aspirations, beneath this broad roof, soft and refreshing as the dew-drop to the thirsting flower would it fall upon their hearts.

"But I also am conscious that I am not without much of earthly ambition. When the cup of adulation is proffered, alas! I drink deeply, and my soul becomes filled with delirious passion. Father! mother! you have not done well in plunging your child into this vortex of mad folly; you have erred in your exceeding love and pride. I am not strong, as you think me: it requires all the influence of this calm hour to subdue me.

"When that intoxicating music swells upon my ear, when gay companions crowd around me, my guardian spirit veils its face in sadness, for I forget myself. I am no longer Joya the serene, glad girl, but Joya the proud, vain, worldly woman. Yet when the spell is broken I see no beauty in the

face which memory recalls,—a woman's face flushed with triumph. They who have called me beautiful would turn away from these pallid cheeks and dimmed eyes ; for I am myself now more worthy of those who I feel are watching over me. Though no visible presence is here, yet there are angels around me filling my soul with humility and penitence.

“ Father in heaven, thou art thrilling thy child, thy penitent child's heart with peace. It beat less wildly in the saloon to-night ; it paid less heed to the music and the dance ; it forgot the diamonds clasping the folds of her costly robe. Something brighter was with her. Ah ! why does that gaze, that earnest, brightening gaze, haunt me thus ?

“ When dear old Cathy died, I thought with her passed away mysteries unfathomed in my childish grasp. I thought contact with the busy world had chased away the phantom dreams which were with me in childhood. It is a glad, holy faith that nestles to my heart, this belief in angels' watchful care ; I would not put from my bosom the thought that the clear eyes of our lost darling, our brother Willie, are ever on me ; but, O ! there are times when a rushing step pursues me, a cold breath fans my cheek, and a weight of woe comes o'er me that chills me as the presence of something fearful.

“ I would, sweet mother, that when in other years you won me in the early evening to open my heart to you, you had checked this then premature desire to fathom the mysteries of life ; for my child's brain lacked strength to meet the spirit's curiosity — it has unnerved me for realities. I am less fitted to struggle with trials and care ; but, Father, with thy aid, I will be strong, and wrestle with my weakness. It is but idle fancy ; I will put from me the memory of the glance which has haunted me ; and, if called by a nearer knowledge of their owner to do so, I will look into the clear depths of those dark eyes, and seek there to fathom, not the mysterious link which has bound me to their memory. I will — ” Suddenly her pen ceased to move, for something brushed heavily against the

folds of the curtain. It floated back, and a bunch of flowers, fresh gathered, glittering with dew, fell at her feet. She raised them, bent over them, and when again she lifted her head, on her lip there glittered a heavy dew-drop. She wrote no more that night.

Many glances rested on the crimson buds, woven among the belle's dark curls, the succeeding day ; but a stranger's gaze alone had power to deepen the color upon her cheek. Costly gems had been laid aside, for those frail, perishing buds.

No ray of the midday sun shining so bright stole through the closed Venetian blinds, but a soft, mellow light flooded the magnificent saloon of the Ocean House. Groups of ladies and gentlemen were waltzing to the music swelling in rich bursts of melody to the stuccoed ceiling, as a skilful hand swept the keys of the piano. But there were two who were seated apart from the rest, and took no heed of the gay ones around ; and both were young in years, with the stamp of intellect on their brows, and light born of high thoughts flashing in their eyes.

The elder — the gentleman — had wheeled a deeply-cushioned arm-chair aside, so that no one but himself could mark the ever-varying expression of Joya Allison's face. A knot of gentlemen had at first clustered about her, as they would gather about a queen upon her throne ; but, as the moments wore on, and she paid little heed to the soft flatteries coined for her ear, one by one they had departed, leaving her listening, with earnest attention, to Brian Vernon.

Ever and anon, in the pauses of the music, the low, eloquent voice fell upon the listener's ear ; and they turned aside, in evident chagrin, leaving the beautiful girl to him who charmed her fancy with his earnest words. And yet these words were not of idle compliment ; his glance alone spoke his homage, and the yet lower, more reverential tones of his voice, when he addressed her.

"I have been long endeavoring to recall where we have

before met Mr. Vernon. Held I to my childhood's faith, I should say in a life which has preceded this ; but when you are looking at me thus earnestly, there is something in your glance which stirs the waves of memory, bringing back the murmur of tones, long ago heard, ringing on my ear." This was said in a soft, questioning voice, as Joya Allison rested her cheek on her hand, and looked calmly up to him ; and he smiled down into those calm, thoughtful eyes, faintly, but with such joy and earnestness that the color grew warmer on her cheek ; and, all the while smiling, he drew forth a tiny package, taking from thence a half-dozen withered buttercups, tied together with a knot of grass, and held them up to view. There came a troubled look to her eyes, as she received them and held them to the light.

" Buttercups, are they not ? " she questioned.

" Yes, Joya, *buttercups* ! "

A warm, bright blush, a sudden start, an immediate retreat, told him that the scene on the beach, five years previous, was unforotten.

He watched her graceful figure, with its proud carriage, cross the saloon and disappear ; then he also arose and passed out, but not to seek her. Joya Allison had bowed her face upon the dressing-table, before which she knelt, while tears rained through her clasped fingers, and the white folds of her dress trembled with the passionate emotion of the moment ; yet the face covered by these slender fingers was glowing in its deep heart-joy, though tear-drops falling drenched the warm smiles.

There was a low knock on the door of her chamber. She sprang up, dashed aside her tears, and the next moment a servant placed a small package in her hands. She opened it, and a sprig of exquisitely-wrought golden buttercups, with emerald leaves, lay before her.

" *Wind them in your hair, Joya, if still I may wear the withered ones upon my heart,*" was written hastily in the

note which accompanied it; and, twining the glittering spray in her dark curls, Joya Allison returned to the saloon.

Light mists were flitting over the moon's disk, while the stars looked all the brighter for the fleecy clouds from which they were peering, as, with a low murmur, like that of a weary spirit, wave after wave sank upon the white-sanded beach.

But neither clouded moon, radiant stars, or sounding sea, won the thoughts of Brian Vernon from the young girl by his side, as they walked slowly along the cliff, overlooking the beach.

It was early in the evening, and the music of the band, speaking of the dance and the lighted saloon, stole upon them at intervals. The sea-breeze stirred the soft curls resting upon Joya's brow, and floated them back from the lovely face on which the lover's gaze was riveted. As he spoke, the small hand was slightly inclined towards him, the spray of golden buttercups glittering in the moonlight, while her step was languid, for he was speaking in accents which thrill the heart of woman. He had offered her the priceless treasure of manhood's love, and into his keeping she had given her own happiness. By both a trust was accepted of more than earthly value; but they had not paused to question themselves whether they had strength to protect from blight that which they had accepted. They gave themselves no time to ponder, to deliberate; they yielded unfearing to the sweet, impassioned impulse of the moment; for it was of joy. The beauty of the treasure which they had taken to their hearts was apparent to them; but whether in its true significance they realized their vast responsibility as the guardian each of the future weal or woe of an immortal spirit, time alone would determine. But in the eye of Heaven a bond was made between Brian Vernon and Joya Allison which required not a legal form to make holy and indissoluble to the hearts which had created it, — a link in the interchange of affection, which,

were its true import understood, no after circumstance could render null. Holy and indissoluble, as in the eye of God, in their own spirit should be the vow of the betrothed, as the bridal which the voice gives utterance to at the altar in the presence of man. For are not our Creator and the angels in heaven more revered witnesses than frail, erring mortals? — is not the heart's murmur more sacred than the voice speaking its conceptions?

“I would, Joya, that there were no dark threads woven in the life which I consecrate to your happiness, and about which your love weaves so pure and bright!” — The fair face was raised questioningly to his. There was a shadow upon it, never before seen by her; a chill came over her, and she sighed involuntarily; but, in the earnestness of his revery, he heeded it not.

It was one of Brian Vernon's dark moments. These would steal upon him like a cloud over the sun, shrouding him in gloom. It was singular, however, in an hour of happiness like that, to admit the dark, doubting thought, while the clear, unfaltering assent to his earnest prayer for love yet lingered on the ear, and the blush born of these words glowed upon her cheek. But it was even so, — dark, palpable gloom stole over him.

“She loves you better, that you are her equal,” whispered the tempter. — “Brian,” commenced the sweet, low voice; and, with a sudden effort, he cast off the weird-like spell which bound him, smiling, as though he would rob the strange sentence escaping him of its coldness and heartlessness, — “I would not, truthful, beautiful, as you are, have dared to love you, Joya, had you been a poor girl, — never!”

To his listener's ear it seemed as though the very wave which beat on the shore took up the refrain, answering, “*Never, never!*” She drew herself somewhat more erect, while even by that dim light he could perceive an expression

of disappointment settle down upon her lip ; but he continued, sorrowfully,

“Hear me first, dear Joya, ere a shadow falls upon your love for me. In early life I was taught a bitter lesson ; lips fair as your own smiled in deceit, a voice even richer-toned breathed a daily falsehood. I have witnessed an honorable, manly heart crushed by a woman’s guile and heartlessness. There was, years ago, a fair and seemingly gentle girl ; she proved false to her own heart’s love, and feigned affection for one who trusted her. But his worldly position alone made him to her desirable, and when her object was attained she scrupled not to cast aside the mask of concealment she had worn, and exhibited to his astounded gaze her perfidy. Joya, that woman was very near to me. With my father’s kiss of love I drank in doubt of woman’s truth. It has gained upon me. O, Joya, wilt thou not dispel with thy holy faith this heart-cloud ? I had not, for thine own sweet sake, dared proffer thee affection, where the demon of suspicion might creep in ; but in wealth and position we are equal, — you, in your beauty and goodness, as far above me as yonder star shining in heaven. When the evil spirit within makes of me a madman, there can be no doubt of you.”

Joya Allison had listened to that strange, passionate declaration with mingled feelings of joy and sorrow ; — joy, that she was permitted to minister to his peace ; sorrow, that such a shadow rested upon his fate. The story of his mother, which he alluded to, was known to her ; for she knew that mother had separated from his father when Brian was very young, content while her income remained undiminished, little heeding her lone husband and deserted child. With Joya, that knowledge pleaded Brian Vernon’s excuse.

In the conscious strength of her own position, she could serenely look upon the future ; but hours afterwards, in the silence of night, a faint shudder crept over her, and she trembled as she realized how full of peril had been the path

leading to her present happiness, had it not been for the now first-prized wealth and attention which was her own.

There were tear-drops of joy and emotion glistening on the lashes that lay upon her cheek as she sank asleep, but the deepening glow thereon dried them all.

A long night of dreams was hers, — fitting rays of sunshine and hazy clouds, — but at length, wrapt in profound slumber, she dreamt of an angel far off in a distant flood of sunlight, looking pityingly on her ; but instead of heeding her imploring prayer, and drawing nearer unto her, further and yet further, half shrouded in its floating rays of light, it receded. Yet in the darkness about another face was visible, and at times it was very like Brian Vernon's, only cold and stern ; and as the sunlight faded from her presence, it frowned, and grew colder, sterner yet. She whispered his name, and he stretched forth his cold hand, and laid it on her heart. Never again it beat with its olden joy ; sleeping or waking, a chill fear filled the spot where a thrill of warm hope had lain. There was a low, distinct sound of sobbing about her ; she echoed it back faintly in her dreaming woe, and awoke. It was not all a dream ; a faint sobbing was echoing there in her silent chamber ; pale and tearful, her mother was seated by her side, with an open letter in her hand.

With a wild fear, the girl sprang up. “ O, mamma, what is it ? My dear, dear father ! ”

“ Hush, Joya, darling ! he is well.” With a deep sigh of relief, she sank back upon her pillow, for in her sudden terror she had feared something terrible might have happened to him.

“ But who is ill, mamma ? ” she continued. She did not dream, poor child, of the possibility of any other misfortune than that of illness or death occurring to them ; but the mother answered, tearfully,

“ We have become very poor, Joya. Your father has been most unfortunate ; nearly our all is swept away.”

“ No, no, dearest mamma ; neither yourself or dear papa

must feel yourselves poor, while you have health and each other, with your child to love; no more than she is poor, though penniless, with you to care for, and—" Alas! why did she grow suddenly pale and tremble? What bitter secret thought hushed the sweet, cheering voice, and bowed her shivering, as though the hand of death was upon her?

"My child, my Joya, is it indeed so terrible to you? Ah! I had feared it!" murmured the mother, bending down, and bathing with her hot tears the cold, white face of her child. But even as she wept there came a glow to the pale cheek; her dark eyes beamed with a sunny ray of hope, and her lip curled half in scorn of her own heart, which had, for the moment, trembled with the memory of her lover's words.

"O, no, dear mamma! it is not for myself I grieve,—it will give me no sorrow: but for my father's sake. Together we will teach him to look upon it but as trifling compared with many another grief which might have come upon us. When shall we go home?"

Fresh tears started to the dim eyes of the mother, for their old home, she knew, was theirs no longer; but so hopefully, so cheerfully, did Joya speak of the future, that, after all, she began to look upon the great change before them as only one of life's mishaps, and as almost immaterial to their future happiness.

And no longer weeping, but with a quiet cheerfulness that surprised even the young consoler of her grief, after having arranged for their departure that very day, after dinner, Mrs. Allison left her child. Joya had no time to think, for her maid came in immediately after her mother. The girl wondered at her young mistress' sadness; for, in spite of all her efforts, Joya felt depressed, and her expression contrasted vividly with the joyousness of the preceding day. Her toilet was simple in the extreme, for she felt instinctively that rich laces and India muslin morning robes were no longer becom-

ing to her altered fortunes ; but the soft, dark curls fell just as becomingly over the beautiful brow, and the plain white folds of her dress floated as gracefully about the symmetrical figure.

The wife of the ruined merchant lacked courage to encounter the curious glances which she felt would meet her now wherever she moved. She pleaded indisposition ; but gazed admiringly on the placid countenance and unmoved bearing of Joya, longing for strength to imitate her example. So alone Joya Allison descended to the breakfast-table. It was somewhat late, and the room was well filled. Her seat at the table was more than half-way down the long dining-hall, and as she passed on many glances followed her, as they were wont to do ; but now there was something less of admiration, more of curiosity, in their expression. There were a few elderly gentlemen, who looked troubled and interested as she passed them ; for they were business men. And there were also young and beautiful girls, who, from their stations in society, should have given evidence of better breeding, who ran their eyes with a half-disdainful expression over the altered toilet of her who, in the glory of her beauty, had often o'ershadowed them.

But there was too much of pure womanly dignity in the heart of Joya Allison to comprehend any such manifestation of envy or malice ; and the only thing she noticed was the omission of a certain moustached gentleman, who was wont to linger near the door, and, with officious haste, throw it wide open for the admission of the belle and heiress. And that alone accounted for the faint, amused smile on her lip as she passed him upon her entrance.

But when, shortly after taking her seat, on looking up she saw Brian Vernon enter, she smiled and motioned him to occupy the vacant seat of Mrs. Allison by her side. He joined her instantly, with a pleased expression, and his man-

ner was of unwonted deference and courteousness. She made no allusion to the news that morning received.

In the richest evening toilet, in her most joyous hour, that young girl never looked so lovely and fascinating as she did that summer morning, with a more than ordinary emotion filling her heart, and shining through her soft, lustrous eyes; smiling occasionally, as though a half-smothered happiness would ripple the deep waves of feeling, and gleam an instant on the surface, yet, withal, a slight shade of care upon her brow.

But one was casting, at intervals, furtive glances from where she was seated, a little further up, on the opposite side of the table; and the light blue eyes glittered serpent-like beneath the long sweeping lashes, that, whenever Brian Vernon's eye wandered to her, drooped timidly on her fair cheek. It was Ellen Ballou, next to Joya Allison the most beautiful woman at the Ocean House. She was slightly below the medium height of woman, very fair, with a delicate rose light on her cheek, and a profusion of bright golden curls; and she was graceful and childlike in manner and expression when her lashes drooped. But the peculiarly glistening blue eyes, when opened wide, imparted an expression far from childlike to her countenance. Like Joya Allison, she was an only child, and her father a gentleman of boundless wealth.

On the morning of which we speak she was more joyous than was her wont; and many were listening admiringly to the sweet, glad laugh that more than once escaped her, and whose low tones stole even upon Brian Vernon's ear. As he arose, at length, and offered his companion his arm, with the intention of passing on to the saloon, Ellen Ballou also joined them, in company with several others. She was unusually affable, and wherever Joya Allison moved there also followed the seemingly joyous, light-hearted Ellen. There was no escaping from this companionship, for the much-desired tête-à-tête with her lover, until he himself very pointedly requested

her to walk with him. She went up to her room to tie on her hat, and tell Mrs. Allison that she would not long be absent ; and Brian Vernon, in the interval, paced to and fro the saloon, with the golden-haired syren by his side, chatting of the gay scenes in their pleasant summer home. Although he appeared to listen courteously, he in truth paid little heed to her words, until, at length, the picture in the tall mirror before him caught his eye. There was a graceful form gliding over the flower-woven carpet, with long floating curls of gold glittering in the sunlight, and a fair face raised to his own, — but that, he fancied, was far from pleasing, — while the more repellant it became to him, for the expression there grew gloomy, even morose. He was unconscious that the lids, then drooping disdainfully, shaded eyes that were powerful to thrill the heart with their beauty ; and the smile, so beaming when it rested there, graced not his lip in that moment of self-depreciation. Still, there was the graceful figure, the high-bred air ; but, in the bitterness of a suddenly clouded heart, it atoned not to him for the want of mere feature-beauty.

A dark, sinister thought intruded itself upon him. In his injustice to himself he became unjust to another. How could the fascinating Joya, with her ardent admiration of the beautiful, her poetic fancy, conceive affection for him ? And just then the voice by his side spoke of Mr. Allison's misfortunes.

“ Ah ! are you aware of it ? ” he answered, carelessly.
“ Miss Allison has not herself spoken of it.”

“ No, to you, Mr. Vernon, perhaps not ; and yet, she was very gay, for one in misfortune, yesterday,” Ellen said, thoughtfully, but significantly.

He started, as though a serpent had stung him, and turned abruptly from his companion. The white hand clutched, with convulsive grasp, the fragile lace shrouding the window by which he stood, his face averted from her gaze, while dark thoughts and bitter filled his heart, crushing out his late warm hopes. *She had known it, then, when she listened to his*

avowal of love. She was conscious *then* of altered fortunes, but she could smile sunnily, and beckon him, the rich man, to her side; for she was secure in his affection from feeling its effects. And now the enigma was solved, in time, thank God, to save himself from the rock upon which his father's happiness had been wrecked. His resolution was taken. With iron-like will, down into the depths of his heart he thrust his misery, and turned to Ellen Ballou.

A group had clustered around Ellen, but she was watching him in seeming sorrow. He approached, and begged her to ride with him. She assumed an air of astonishment, and he pressed her to consent. She did so, and retired to arrange her habit, promising speedily to return. As she came down she met a servant coming out of Mrs. Allison's apartment with a note in his hand; she stopped him, to ask some trifling question, and her eye detected, at a glance, that the note was addressed to Brian Vernon. She immediately took it from the servant, saying, "I am going to Mr. Vernon,—give it to me." When alone she opened it, though her cheek flushed with the consciousness of the ignominy of the deed; but it died away, and, with a bitter smile, she thrust it into her pocket.

A half-hour had passed, and still Joya came not. She was weeping with her mother,—weeping over another dispatch that had followed the one which was received the previous night, announcing the dangerous illness of Mr. Allison. She was not forgetful of her lover in her affliction; and she wrote to him a few hurried lines, explaining the cause of her delay, and requesting him to come to the private parlor, as she and her mother were preparing for immediate departure. They were to leave in the eleven o'clock boat, and it was but little over an hour before the appointed time. At length, after many moments of anxious waiting, Joya heard his voice on the piazza below; and she went out upon the balcony opening from their room, to look down and motion him to haste.

There was a large group of gentlemen standing before the hotel, and several were riding in company down the street on horseback. But two horses, beautiful, spirited creatures, stood pawing the ground impatiently beneath, and upon the back of one Brian Vernon was assisting Ellen Ballou. Ellen was looking very lovely in her cap and dark plume, her soft curls escaping in bright waves from their confinement. Joya glanced around to see who was to accompany her, and sighed involuntarily at the recollection of the past, as she remembered those pleasant rides were no more for her, when Brian Vernon himself sprang into the saddle, and the party rode onward. They had not proceeded many rods before the girl turned half round, and glanced up to the balcony where stood the forsaken one, and there was a perceptible gleam of triumph in her blue eyes. Spell-bound with astonishment, Joya Allison stood gazing after the receding form, riding close and slowly by her rival's side. But, when they had disappeared, one hand stole slowly up from where it hung listless by her side, and pressed tightly on her heart, while tears rolled slowly down her cheeks, and fell heavily, like rain-drops, upon the balustrade. Only her Father in heaven, watching over his sorrowing child, could fathom the depth of her woe. She had a faint hope that some message explanatory of her lover's conduct had been left; but there was none. As the hour wore on she grew restless and feverish; a burning desire came over her to see him again, if it were for the last time; but still he returned not. The words which he had given utterance to the previous night recurred to her, and the chill experienced in the morning pressed upon her waking moments. Mrs. Allison grew impatient, for she was fearful that they should miss the morning boat. The carriage stood at the door, and her mother had gone down a moment. In bitter anguish, Joya Allison bowed over the centre-table, and left there the golden buttercups, with a few brief parting lines.

"Mamma can wait for me no longer. I would fain have spoken my farewell to you, Mr. Vernon; but, as it is your wish, I submit. These jewels are destined for your bride. They are returned to you; for the poor but proud Joya Allison they are no longer appropriate."

Nearly a quarter of an hour afterwards Brian Vernon and Ellen Ballou returned; and, on learning the departure of Mrs. Allison, as Joya had anticipated, Vernon ascended immediately to the parlor recently occupied by them, to ascertain if there was a note left for him. There was none; the jewels and accompanying note had disappeared. He fastened the door, threw himself upon the sofa, and gave vent to a fierce burst of anguish. It was like a tornado sweeping over a sunny scene; it left him cold and seemingly calm. But he neither followed the Allisons to New York, nor wrote to Joya; all was apparently over between them. He became very gay, and the triumphant belle, whose claims were now undisputed, was seen often, at sunset, seated by his side in the beautiful, light phaeton which he drove, a veil of rich lace thrown over her golden curls, upon which the glittering light of the departing sun fell in gorgeous beauty.

Scarcely a week passed after the departure of Joya from Newport, when one afternoon Ellen Ballou appeared before Brian Vernon with the spray of golden buttercups in her hair which he had given to Joya Allison. In answer to his startled inquiry as to where she obtained them, she answered, quietly, at a certain jeweller's, where she had been attracted by their beauty and resemblance to those Miss Allison had worn, and which she had admired. That night Brian Vernon sought out the jeweller, to ascertain how they came in his possession, for he was confident they were the same he had given Joya. They had been disposed of for a comparatively low sum, as their owner was anxious to part with them, by Miss Allison's maid, who was well known to the gentleman, and who had been left behind to follow them the succeeding

day. A suspicion of the girl's guilt never crossed the mind of Brian Vernon, and from that hour his constant endeavor was to drive all thought of Joya Allison from his heart forever.

In the all-absorbing excitement of her beloved father's dangerous illness, Joya found little time to give to the past; but when the wild delirium gave place to a death-like lethargy of mind, from which all efforts to awaken the ruined merchant proved futile, in Joya's long, silent watches by his side, the bitterness of her fate, the hopelessness of her lot, forced itself upon her in vivid contrast with the full reality of the happiness which she had lost; and as day after day wore away, and there came no token of remembrance from the still-adored one, her spirit quailed and fainted beneath the burden imposed upon it, and she too drooped to a bed of unconsciousness and protracted illness. But youth and a strong constitution triumphed. She awoke to life and its manifold duties, strong, firm and tearless, to suffer and endure. But the light was dim in her eyes; for hope had burned low in the heart of youth, and gone out. The warm glow of joy flushed no longer her cheek. All poetical conceptions, glowing imagery, and girlish dreamings, were at an end, and naught but the cold, stern realities of life seemed left for her. But soon filial love warmed the chilled heart, and grew into a beautiful ray of sunshine streaming over her desolate path.

The old, luxurious residence was given up, with all its elegances and most of its comforts; a simple, almost meagre home alone was left to them. But Joya strove earnestly to make it light and cheerful to her sorrowing mother, and smitten father, who had now grown querulous, repining ever, in his half unconsciousness, for his old luxuries, and pleading often to be taken to his former home. The only thing that had any power to soothe him was the music of his child's voice as she sang; and that voice was one of unwonted melody.

One day in the spring, the arm-chair was wheeled before an open window through which fell the bright sunlight, and the old man reclined therein, while, with her sewing in her hand, Joya sat before him, singing a soft Italian air. The attention of a passer-by was attracted by the extreme beauty of her voice, and he paused a moment to listen. The listener proved to be no other than Beneditta, an old Italian music-teacher; and he recognized a cultivated, as well as melodious voice, containing something familiar in its tones. Unable to repress his curiosity, he approached the window, and unperceived stood gazing in, beating time softly with his cane to the music of the song. After a while the girl, glancing up to her father, perceived the stranger; both started with a mutual exclamation of surprise, for Beneditta and his old pupil, Joya, instantly recognized each other. The next moment he entered the apartment, apologizing for his intrusion, and explaining the cause.

Little by little the misfortunes and present embarrassments of his old patrons were gleaned from them, and, with many kindly expressions of sympathy, he departed. He was an old man, and utterly absorbed in his art; and although for several years he had relinquished the more laborious branches of his profession, he still devoted himself to the art which he adored, and for which he had sacrificed the hours of youth, manhood and age.

That day he mused much with himself, and before sunset Joya Allison was invited to appear early on the morrow on urgent business before him, at the little room where in times past he had given instruction, and where he was now busy amid those compositions on which were founded his hopes of future fame. A brilliant thought had occurred to him; to train the rich, bird-like voice of the young girl to a yet higher state of cultivation, and introduce her to the public in an opera of his own composing.

Joya was with him in the morning, and while waiting a

short time, while he concluded some trifling business of the moment, her glance wandered over the little cheerless room, with its grand piano and tall piles of music-leaves, where often, in days passed, she had been in company with the brilliant friends of her school-days ; and her eyes glistened with emotion, her pale cheeks glowed, as the old man entered ; for joyous memories were busy within her. The musician welcomed her courteously, kindly for him, and, taking a seat, with brief words imparted his desire to her. At first she shrank timidly from the thought ; but he held out such high hopes of success that at length he won her to listen eagerly. It would be a holy, blessed privilege to restore, by her means, her parents to their old home ; and would it not serve also to fill what, with all the beautiful resignation with which she bowed to her fate, seemed to her but a blank existence ?

Beneditta made her sing to him, and the room was filled with glad, gushing music. She grew inspired once more ; radiant, beaming, was Joya Allison. But with the sudden flash of beauty over the late pallid face the old man grew troubled. Coldly and sternly he said, " I shall, after trouble, care and expense, bring you out ; some young man will conceive a passion for you, and seek to make you his wife ; you will forget your old friend, and all my labor will be lost."

" You mistake, Signor Beneditta ; I shall never marry any one," she answered, gently and sorrowfully, but growing pale.

" You are a rare flower — a bud of genius which I would cull from temptation and consecrate to art. I would behold you bud and glow in art's glorious sunshine. I can perceive in you the soul of a second Corinne, when you sing to me, Signora Joya," said the old man, in impassioned tones.

She made him no answer ; her head only drooped a little lower. " Will you swear not to marry, — to give yourself to the divine profession under my guidance ? "

Her soft, sad gaze was upon him. Was he pitiless, that he

thus sought to immolate that young heart in a living tomb? "Will you not give yourself to music, signora, while Beneditta lives to guide you? Swear it!" He drew himself up with vain arrogance; he felt very vigorous; he could not bring himself, the old man of seventy winters, to look upon his tenure of life as frail or brief.

"I swear it, Beneditta!" said the clear, low voice, as the girl's head sank upon her bosom.

Again the icy hand seemed to clasp her heart; again the echo of the wave beating on the shore answered, "*Never — never!*"

A pleasant, airy cottage was taken in the suburbs of the city, and there the Allisons removed immediately. On the pale countenance of Mrs. Allison once more smiles began to dawn; and the invalid grew daily less fretful, content to sit ever in the warm sunlight, silent and thoughtful, but evidently failing.

And Joya, now the bride of song, silent and pallid, bowed over her task, or for hours sat in the lonely study of Beneditta, improving wondrously under his guidance. One day, as she sang to him, the sweet notes, echoing around and filling the old man with rapture, floated back upon her own heart, waking her to a full realization of the wonderful power which she possessed. Then there flashed instantaneously over her a dream of future triumph, and from that hour new life appeared to glow within her.

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Three years subsequent to these events, a young girl appeared in a new opera in Paris. A perfect furore of delight hailed her début. The angel melody of the voice, which floated in soft, rich strains upon the listener's ear, echoed again and again upon their hearts when the beautiful presence was withdrawn. Cold, statue-like, she came before the

immense audience that welcomed her, and bowed, seemingly deaf to their greeting. But, when the house began to fill with melody, the color glowed upon her cheek, her eyes beamed, she was like one inspired. She gave herself up utterly to her art; the woman was lost in the artist.

And this was the pupil of Beneditta. After her father's death, in company with her mother, he took Joya to Paris; and, as she out-soared even the limits of his capacity, he placed her under the guidance of the world-renowned Garcia.

Beneditta had given up his own ardent dreams of fame; his whole soul was wrapt up in his pupil.

While the young *débutante* sang nightly, the thin, venerable countenance of the old man, lighted with triumph, was to be seen gazing upon her every moment.

From Paris she proceeded to Naples; and there her fame had preceded her. The night of her *début* the young secretary of the American ambassador there entered the large opera-house, filled to overflowing with a brilliant and aristocratic audience. A party of Americans occupied a box near the stage, and the silken curtains were put far back, as though the occupants courted the gaze of that assembly.

Conspicuous amid the brilliant ones around was a young girl seated therein, with her golden curls bound with jewels, her blue eyes bent proudly down upon the upturned countenances. Many could perceive the rich lace shading the white, voluptuous bust tremble, and her hand stir the perfumed air with the heavy feathers of her fan, as the young American took a seat by her side, conspicuous in his simple, dark, national dress, amid surrounding uniforms and glittering costumes. But he drew himself haughtily erect as the proudest there, though he was very pale; and in the gaze of those dark hazel eyes, which swept the circle around, there was something of sadness, as, resting his elbow upon the arm of his chair, he bowed his head upon his hand, while his eyelids drooped.

The color deepened upon the lady's cheek, but she took no further heed of his seeming want of courtesy, although she was the beautiful American belle at Naples, and the most favored amid all worshippers. Yet the only one swelling her train who was chary of his homage was the young American attaché who was seated by her side, silent, cold, utterly indifferent to her presence. Shadows were warring in his heart, where once had dwelt sunshine.

He paid no heed to the murmur rising with the curtain ; he glanced not up, until a thunder of applause echoed through the house, announcing the presence of the queen of song. Then he grew white and rigid as quarried marble ; for the lustrous eyes of the cantatrice were upon him, but no sound came from her pale, parted lips. The audience deemed her overpowered by sudden timidity, and again they applauded encouragingly.

The tall, erect figure of an old man was seen to rise from his seat near the stage, and gesticulate violently. It was Beneditta, half frantic with fear ; but, ere the applause ceased to vibrate on the air, the color gushed back to her cheek, and the parted lips gave forth soft notes. That vast temple dedicated to art was filling with song ; for the dark eyes had wandered to the golden-haired one by the secretary's side, and the spell was broken.

Bellini's opera of *Norma* was produced, and a young and lovely creature played the part of Adalgisa ; but the audience paid no heed to her. *Norma*, the erring priestess, represented by that impassioned, burning spirit, held all hearts captive. But all else that night was forgotten in the gloriously beautiful woman ; for the voice of a sorrowing angel, in wild, delicious melody, murmuring a burning prayer to unhappy passion, was given in all the thrilling cadences of love and despair, waking in many hearts the fountain of tears.

When the curtain fell, there followed a long-continued

burst of enthusiasm. The only two there who were mute were Ellen Ballou, the American belle, bending slightly forward over the cushioned balustrade, with a bitter, ironical expression, and her companion, Brian Vernon, still, statue-like and rigid.

Brian had not heeded the sharp, startled whisper which told him the prima donna before them was Joya. His own heart had, with a mighty throb, recognized in the spirit of music his lost love, when her first glance fell upon him ; but he was spell-bound. The audience grew impatient, for the cantatrice lingered long, as though she courted not their homage ; but at length she came, no longer in opera costume, simple as a village girl, but for the regal air, and golden butter-cups in her hair.

In silent grace she stood erect amid the storm of fragrant flowers falling upon the stage, while bouquets with jewelled bracelets rained at her feet. But there was no gleam of exultation in the woman's beautiful eyes : with a wild, pleading glance she was gazing upon one countenance, alone visible amid the sea of human faces before her. Suddenly she grew white as the folds of her robe, stretched forth her fair arms, and, murmuring sorrowfully "*Beneditta*," sank upon her knee amid a profound silence, while the whole audience arose breathless upon their feet. A vast sigh broke the thrall which held them, and stirred the silent air, making an avalanche of applause. They deemed it but a part of the artist's rôle. It was the woman's heart drooping and fainting in its hour of triumph, — the unconquering yearning for affection once more dawning, — the sweet flower of love unfolding its delicate petals to droop beneath the chill blasts of despair. Beyond the thrilling glance which Brian Vernon had bent upon her, as he marked the jewels woven in her hair, peered the old man's face, cold, inexorable. Again the icy hand clasped her heart, again the wild waves seemed to murmur, "*Never — never !*"

As the curtain fell Brian Vernon arose ; but he staggered, and caught his chair for support, pressing his handkerchief to his lips. Even Ellen Ballou was startled out of her wonted elegant self-possession, as she beheld it crimson, and the dark eyes grow dim. A footman supported him to his carriage, fainting ; and while all Naples rang out, on the morrow, with the mighty triumph of the prima donna, tidings of the dangerous illness of the elegant American secretary found its way to many a palace home.

From an early hour until noon, the apartments occupied by the cantatrice were besieged by a host of courtly worshippers, eager to lay their homage at her feet : but the stately old man Beneditta guarded well his prison-bird of song, and one after another departed in disappointment. But at midday her carriage drew up before the residence of the American ambassador, and she was seen therein closely veiled, with Beneditta by her side, while they waited the return of the messenger who had entered in haste. When he appeared, he placed in the hands of the prima donna a note, and, springing to his place behind her, the carriage rolled homewards. But the shrouding veil was put back, and the white face bent eagerly over the note trembling in her hand.

“ Beneditta, I cannot sing to-night ! ”

“ Signora, you must ! ”

“ Not to-night, O, not to-night, Beneditta ! I am so weak, so like a sick one ! See how I tremble ! it would be a mockery, with this wan face.”

“ It must glow, child of song, bride of music, in the glory of your triumph, as you bow not to the welcoming thousands, but to the divine art.”

She complied with his wishes, but it was as though a statuo had by a magic touch discoursed rich strains of music ; there was no inspiration, no glowing action. They greeted her warmly ; it was only a new feature presented to them. Again her carriage, in the sultry heat of midday, stood before the

residence of the American embassy, and still Beneditta accompanied her with a clouded brow ; but now the bulletin of the physician was more appalling than the previous one.

“Beneditta,” she said, raising her veil and bending her glance full upon him, “the American secretary is very ill ; he is an old friend ; he desires to see me ; I am going to him ; will you accompany me ?”

“You cannot go, signora ; you must come here no more ; it is unbecoming in you, this anxiety for a stranger.”

“Am I your slave, Signor Beneditta, that thus you presume to dictate to me ?” answered the lady, haughtily, springing out and passing up the marble steps, heedless of his anger. Half an hour afterwards she came out pale, calm and serene, paying no heed to the angry old man. That night she appeared before the public yet differently. A holy serenity, a quiet peace, seemed to fill her heart.

Daily, for a week, her carriage drove to the door, and the countenance of Beneditta grew ever colder and sterner ; but, after the one interview, she sought no other. He hastened the conclusion of her engagement with all possible speed, and the last night of her appearance in Naples was at hand. Alone the prima donna was seated, in deep revery, when the door of her apartment was thrown open, and the American secretary was announced. He hastened to her side ; she arose and laid her little hand in his in greeting ; but she expressed no joy at his convalescence. Cold, pale, she stood before him.

“And is it thus you welcome me, Joya ? Was it but in mockery you stood beside my sick couch, and spoke so gently and cheeringly to the mute, suffering man ? Cannot years of misery atone for the idle bitterness and doubt which made me false alike to myself and you ? O, Joya, idol of my boyhood, more than idol of my manhood, when you came before me in that lighted temple with the token of our first meeting, the indissoluble bond between us, — O, then my spirit stretched

forth its arms imploringly to you ; then I prayed God not to die, though in my madness I once thought it would be a boon. Then life grew so precious, with the bright hope of winning back the olden love you bore me, when, Joya, by my side, on Newport beach, and I — ”

“ *Hush !* ” it was only a whisper that fell upon his ear, but in its clear, solemn accents there was a strange power to arrest the tide of love-words ebbing from his lips, for she was pointing to Beneditta, the old man who followed her as a shadow wherever she moved. Over his heart there flashed a sudden fear ; he dropped the cold, nerveless hand he held, and started back, murmuring,

“ O God, Joya, who is it ? ”

“ Beneditta,” she whispered, as though that name sufficed to define the whole burden of her misery.

“ Thy husband, — that old man ? — thou *his* wife ? ”

Beneditta came forward. “ Not my wife, nor the wife of any other man, yet a bride nevertheless,” he said.

“ Is he mad, Joya ? What means he, that he taunts me thus ? ” questioned Brian Vernon, sternly, as he turned towards her.

Joya’s whole countenance was expressive of suffering ; but she roused herself, and, turning proudly to Beneditta, desired him to leave her.

“ But your vow, Signora Joya ! ”

“ Is registered, Signor Beneditta,” she answered, with forced calmness, pointing to heaven ; and he departed.

The shadows of night began to fill the apartment before Brian Vernon departed ; and then again Beneditta entered. Joya was sitting where he had left her, with her head bowed low on her bosom, her dark hair half shrouding her face. She did not look up until he called her by name ; then she put back her hair, gazed upon him earnestly, and threw herself at his feet, praying, “ O, Beneditta, spare me ! — be merciful to me ! I am so young, I may yet experience so much joy, and

life has been so very dark to me, — do not force me now to shut from my heart, all chilled with woe, the sunshine which would warm it ! When I vowed away my life to you, there was a veil shrouding my spirit which seemed impenetrable ; but it is lifted now, and in thy hands is my fate. Beneditta, I am so young to live lone and unloved ! To cast all these heart-pinings from me is a mightier task than I have strength to perform.”

“The sun is setting, signora ; expectant thousands wait your coming ; prepare to receive their plaudits, sworn devotee of music. Bride of song, cast from your soul the mortal weakness which humbles you. You must ascend to heaven, when the golden chain of life is severed, singing your own requiem.”

“Or thine, Beneditta !”

A sudden tremor shook the frame of the haughty man ; but he threw it off. He was inexorable, — deaf to the passionate pleader kneeling low before him. He left her there, silent, mute in her hopelessness, striving to put from her heart the sweet words of contrition and affection still echoing on her ear. Vain, futile was the effort. They mingled with the old man’s words of doom.

An avalanche of applause shook the vast opera-house to its foundation, for the cantatrice stood before them, her cheeks burning, her dark eyes glancing, her red lips parted, while flowers rained at her feet. But no note of music mingled with the deafening applause. It died away, and, breathless, they gazed upon her. She grew pale beneath their gaze, — paler and paler. The old man arose, tall and erect, and “*Thy vow !*” in stern accents, falling from his lips, echoed through the house. She pressed her hand heavily upon her heart, with an expression of terrible pain, and a hoarse murmur fell upon all ears, — a wild, ineffectual effort to sing. Her voice came not at her bidding.

The bird of song was mute ! She covered her pale face with her hands, bowing amid the crushed flowers on the stage, a stricken thing.

For a moment the rigid figure of Beneditta stood erect, and fixed its fiery gaze upon her ; then he was seen to waver, totter a step forward, and, in the presence of all, fall lifeless, as the curtain fell over the drooping one upon the stage. He was taken up and cared for, but he never once again breathed audibly. His heart was broken. Joya Allison was again free, but her voice had gone forever !

A bride, leaning gracefully upon her husband's arm, enters the saloon of the Ocean House, and all eyes are bent upon her joyous and beautiful face. But the proud and noble-looking gentleman by her side leads her out hastily, as she whispers,

"Take me out upon the balcony, dear Brian ! My heart is full ; I cannot brook their gaze. This place has conjured up so many memories, Brian, the tears would steal out, in spite of myself," she said, as he drew forward a chair, and seated himself by her side, to watch the sunset.

"I need to listen to your voice, Joya, to realize that this is no fleeting dream, as I look upon you with this precious spray of buttercups in your hair, just as you looked here four years ago," answered the young husband. — "Why do you sit so thoughtful, and gaze upon vacancy ?" he continued, noticing the abstracted expression of his fair wife.

"I was only rejoicing, Brian, that Ellen prized these gems so lightly ; for I wept, partly with joy, partly with sorrow, when I chanced upon them at a jeweller's, one day, in Paris ; — sorrow, Brian, that you had parted so lightly with what had been once mine by your gift ; joy, to look upon them, and think of you. But we are to think no more of aught that is unpleasant, are we, Brian ?"

“ Only when our happiness seems too great for this world, my sweet wife, and we need some shadowy remembrance to wean us from too much of earthly idolatry.”

“ We will pray God for strength, Brian ; and, in our deep gratitude for the shadowy mists which have flitted over our spirits, and by his mercy been dispelled, forget him not in our joy.”

TO THE ANGEL AZRAEL.

ANGEL of Peace ! where wert thou in that hour ?
Thy pale lips should have pressed the open flower,
Sealed the soft beauty of its stainless bloom,
Shut the pure chalice with its sweet perfume.
I called thee, with the cool dew of thy breath
To save it from Earth's burning sun, O, Death !

I called thee, as life's dawn-light slowly broke
Into the morning's fulness, and I woke
From the dim dreamings of those mystic years
That fold the sheathéd Future's golden ears.
For thee the fair fruit whitened to its prime ;
Where wert thou, Reaper, in that harvest-time ?

I called thee, wandering through Eden vales,
On the sweet breath of its enamored gales ;
I called thee, kneeling low in trusting prayer
Amid its flowery meads, before the glare
Of the fierce sword had swept across that sod
Where I had held a calm, near walk with God.

I called thee, with thy white wings, to o'erspread
That roseate radiance ere its bloom had fled ;
To press thy cool hands on my throbbing breast,
Lest its glad pulse should change to wild unrest ;
With thy deep calm to brood upon my dreams,
Until I woke beyond earth's turbid streams.

In vain. Thy light shone on me from afar,
Like the pure ray of an unfathomed star ;
Faith's silver lamp burnt tremulous and low,
Oft flickering and dimmed by earth's wild woe ;
Love's pearly flower flushed into crimson light,
Then in dark ashes faded from my sight.

Once more I called thee, through that solemn gloom,
With the broad shadow of thy sable plume
To sweep athwart those memories that made
The past all desert with their Upas shade ;
To fill for my parched lips thy Lethean bowl,
And loose the cords that bound a weary soul.

Yet thou came not ; low kneeling by the pyre
Of my most cherished hopes and high desire,
I bowed my head, and, in their darkened dust,
Read the sad record of mere mortal trust ;
I had made idols, then called thee to save
My heart from vigils o'er their early grave.

Reaper of God ! I called on thee in vain
To bind for me earth's rich and ripened grain ;
To save, undimmed, Love's fair and festal flower,
And bear me, trancéd, from an Eden bower,
To that sweet realm whose sunlit beauty lies,
Eternal as it dawned, in Paradise !

Angel of Death ! I called on thee in vain,
To shield me from life's mystic rood of pain ;
But faith's pure light, unquenched by the gloom,
Reveals a clime where yet Love's flowers shall bloom ;
And seed here sown, with tears of bitter grief,
Bear joy's rich fruitage for thy banded sheaf.

HEATH HALL;

OR, A PACKAGE OF LETTERS.

“Love had departed; youth, too, had departed;
Hope had departed; and my life before me
Lay covered with the ashes of the past,—
Dark, barren, cold, drear, flinty, colorless!”

WHILE on a visit, late in the summer of 18—, to a charming country residence situated at some distance up the Hudson, the ennui consequent on a rainy day induced a gentleman then visiting at the same house to relate for my diversion the following narrative.

We were, at the time, seated in the deep embrasure of the library window, which commanded an extensive view of the surrounding country, when my attention was attracted in the direction of Heath Hall, — a venerable old place, which had been purchased, a short time prior, by a gentleman of fortune, and was at this period undergoing extensive repairs and improvements, preparatory to his return from Europe, where he was then travelling with his family.

“A mournful story is connected with those gray walls,” said my acquaintance, as the sharp lightning played over its balconied windows and terraces.

“Ah!” and I looked up questioning, for something in the saddened tones of his voice attracted my attention.

“It is a sorrowful story, and a long one,” he answered. But I assured him of my curiosity, which was fairly aroused, and he proceeded to gratify me.

“The house, which you will have perceived is very old, was built by an Englishman of property, who, early in life marrying a young American girl, made our country his home. To this wife he was profoundly attached; and she bore him two children, — the eldest a girl, and but one year the senior of her brother, Ralph. For years this man apparently required no earthly gift to add to his entire happiness. But in the twelfth year of Eda the daughter’s age, the mother sickened and died. From the shock of her death the bereaved husband was said to have never recovered, although he lived to behold his eldest child marry, and Ralph, his young idol, return from the completion of his collegiate studies, full of genius, and honorable and manly as even his yearning heart and exacting tenderness could desire.

“Then a little while, and he followed the bride of his youth to rest. The deserted house became too lone a home for its young master, and he went abroad.

“When he returned, the smooth cheek, the light thoughtlessness of boyhood, had forever disappeared. A shadow lay upon his spirit, veiling the sunshine which once had radiated over his expressive lineaments. For a long time it lingered, then grew faint, and ever fainter, until the shadow also was but a vestige of the past.

“In the gay circle, which missed in his presence one of its brightest ornaments, it was whispered that the brilliant Maud Rutherford was the cause of his seclusion; but wherefore none knew. Only one thing was certain — the gloriously gifted woman, who had so long queened it over many hearts, drooped and paled with his departure, until there were those who spoke of her as one suffering the anguish of unrequited affection. But, with the first whisper which reached her ear, Maud Rutherford roused herself from the death-like lethargy which had stolen over her, and once more brilliant as of old appeared in society, in defiant scorn, as it were, of the insidious whispers of those who envied her her beauty’s

power. A little while, and again the recherche circle in which she moved was convulsed with amazement. The wondrously gifted belle of twenty summers was the bride of a millionaire of sixty.

“Years rolled by, and in the quietude of Heath Hall Ralph appeared to find a deep charm, for it was only at rare intervals he left its seclusion. But during his thirtieth year he experienced, in a temporary absence from home, a new emotion. The love which had been chilled and thrown back upon his heart once more kindled into being, and when he returned home from the south there accompanied him a half-wild, half-timid girl. Elise was the name by which he called her to his friends; but in the holy privacy of wedded life, in the sanctuary of home, she was his ‘southern flower,’ his ‘blossom of the wilderness.’

“Then there followed many weeks when his fellow-men knew Ralph Heath to be blessed in the presence which cast sunshine on his hearth, so full of serene happiness was his countenance when he mingled among them.

“But into society he never took his wife, whose beauty became proverbial, the country round, by those who had beheld her. Some said it was from jealous fear, lest others looking upon her should learn to worship her with his own idolatry. But there were those who knew him better; and they knew that if he feared, it was lest the world’s contact should rob her of her child-like simplicity, — should sully her, the immaculately pure.

“Sorrow at length spread its dusky wing over the late joyous home; a woe unfathomable, impenetrable, bowed the master of Heath Hall. Once it was lifted; but again it deepened, for soon the young wife was laid, a withered flower, in the silent tomb, by the side of the pale little blossom which had budded in her bosom.

“And once more Ralph Heath became a wanderer in foreign lands. Years passed, and he returned to part with the habitual luxuries of his life, to go on a mission to the far-off West.

“It was during this mission that I first knew Mr. Heath, in the secluded village which grew up beneath his care, and where my own boyhood’s days were past. It was under his superintendence that I was prepared for college; and during the time I learnt, with all others over whom fell the spell of his presence, to love and respect him to an unusual degree. The serene, and, with all his meekness and lowly reverence, high-bred man, seemed prematurely aged. Years fraught with many changes went by, until Mr. Heath became but a pleasant memory to look back to amid life’s strife, when the interest he had shown for me in boyhood manifested itself anew by a summons to the home to which he had returned, to spend, as he told me, the brief residue of a life gradually ebbing to eternity. This return, I further learned, was caused solely by his being no longer able to discharge with fidelity his duties as a pastor.

“In entire ignorance of the affluence of Mr. Heath, I was profoundly astonished to find that the dim, shadowy old house, with its luxuries of other years, and troop of ancient servitors, grown gray with their master, was indeed his,—his who had absented himself from its enjoyment, accepting, through love for God and man, a laborious life of arduous care and self-denial.

“For over two weeks I remained his guest, awed, but never wearied, by the breathless quiet which pervaded the entire place, the stealthy steps with which the subdued-looking inmates went about their household duties.

“In the interval, my days were either passed in the fine library, or fishing in the river, with Tony—who was, apparently, the confidential servant of Mr. Heath—for my guide.

“He was a quiet, docile being, and the only time I ever knew him startled out of his wonted apathy was consequent on my proposing a day’s excursion into the forest with my gun.

“ ‘No, no, massa ! De tunder ob de gun wake missus Elise, — de birds’ little cry break massa’s heart again,’ he answered, with an expression of terror.

“ ‘Who is Mrs. Elise, Tony ?’ I questioned ; and it was then that I learnt that Ralph Heath had not been always thus alone in the world. Yet, grievous as had been his affliction and his bereavement, I found it difficult to realize a life-long agony, such as the negro represented his to have been.

“ We had been walking, whilst he spoke, up an avenue leading from the river’s brink ; and he took me round by a serpentine path, through the grounds, to a bank, standing upon which I could overlook a high fence, enclosing a garden that lies upon the south side of the house, surrounding a large, two-storied octagon wing, of a more modern build than the main building.

“ Previously, half-concealed as the high fence was by trees and shrubbery, I had imagined it to be some vegetable garden, fenced off from the remainder of the grounds ; but, looking down on the rare flowers, the carefully-tended shrubs, with the row of French windows opening thereon, and all shrouded by soft, warm-hued curtains, the gray walls, half-veiled by the fragrant honeysuckle and running roses, I knew that a deeper interest was attached to that spot than any other. I was right. It was the dead wife’s garden ; and those curtained windows opened into the boudoir, where all remained as when she had dwelt therein.

“ With a yet deeper interest I that night gazed on Ralph Heath, as he sank back in the deep arm-chair, with its time-worn crimson cushions, which I noticed he suffered no human being but himself to occupy.

“ Deeply furrowed and worn as was that pallid face, I could perceive how grandly beautiful it must have been in youth, with the dark, soul-lit eyes, intellectual brow, and smile of woman-like tenderness radiating over all.

“How deep a charm those evening hours possessed, I realized not until they had ceased to be!

“It was his wont to nightly unbend from his habitual reserve, and discourse of his long sojourn in foreign lands; while far into the night he would hold me captive by the spell of his eloquence.

“Never once, however, did he allude to a period when his life was less isolated. For upwards of twenty years no guest but myself had been welcomed at Heath Hall. I once alluded to his loneliness, but never again desired to interrogate him, so sorrowful, so intensely agonized, was the expression which stole over his countenance, as he answered, ‘Alone, alone on earth!’

“The morning subsequent to Tony’s revelation of his master’s secret, as I descended to the library, I encountered the faithful domestic in the hall, coming in quest of me, in an agony of terror. He had discovered Mr. Heath rigid and immovable, seated in the library, unable to articulate. When I entered, I found him in the same position in which I had bade him ‘good-night’ late the previous evening. His eyes were unclosed, and they turned with a steady, earnest gaze upon me, while the hoarse, low murmur on his lip indicated the fatal stroke of paralysis which had smitten him.

“He was conveyed to his chamber, and skilful medical aid was summoned to his assistance; but care and skill were alike useless. The decree had gone forth; the hours of the weary old man were nearly numbered. The steady gaze of his dark but dim eyes was fixed upon my countenance; and I realized with pain that he would fain have spoken to me, had he possessed the power.

“Late in the afternoon of the second day, with a faint motion of his hand he pointed to an old-fashioned ebony writing-desk. I instantly brought it to his side, and with the same feeble gesture he motioned me to retain it. A little while afterwards the gazing eyes grew dimmer and dimmer, cold perspiration

gathered on the marble brow, and the old man slept; — but it was the sleep of eternity!

“That night there arrived from New York a stranger, who announced himself as the administrator of Mr. Heath’s estate. He was affable and courteous, inviting me to remain until after the funeral ceremonies of my old friend.

“In the morning, as I descended to breakfast, I beheld Tony standing in the half-open doorway of an apartment hitherto closed. He beckoned me to his side; and, at once comprehending whose room it had been, with irrepressible curiosity I crossed the threshold and entered, closely followed by Tony, who glanced with a mingled feeling of curiosity and terror about him.

“I found myself in the centre of a spacious and lofty octagon room, with rose-colored walls, slightly faded and discolored by time. The morning light, shining through the falling curtains, flooded all around with a soft, warm glow, that lit up the tall mirrors, and gilded into deeper beauty many fine old paintings.

“The few pieces of statuary which there were in the room were covered with crisp and withered wreaths, which for years had draped the marble. In the alcove between the two windows stood a low couch, luxuriously cushioned, and a rich crimson mantle lay thereon. A little way off stood a bird-cage by a stand of flowers, all fresh and fragrant, contrasting singularly with the faded, deserted appearance of the place. A piece of sugar, gray with dust, was thrust betwixt the tarnished bars of the empty cage; and a gossamer handkerchief, richly frilled with lace, lay across an open volume upon a table.

“But all these things I noted with a rapid glance, for the moment afterwards my attention was riveted by a painting from which a thick veil was gathered back. So life-like was the effect of the picture, that I started involuntarily, as though a breathing, human woman stood before me.

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“Not radiant, ethereal, was the beauty of the portrait of the wife of Ralph Heath. The eyes, large and deeply blue, bore a mingled expression of tenderness and spirit ; with all their dreaminess there burnt within their fathomless depths so intense a light. The exquisitely-cut features were wasted and transparent, while there was a sorrowful parting of the red lips, as though they had quivered with an emotion of anguish at the moment the artist sought to perpetuate their expression on his canvas.

“A rich robe of crimson cashmere fell in soft folds about the delicately-rounded limbs, and deep ruffles of costly lace shaded the white throat and thin little hands. Like an infant’s, but for its luxuriance, was the golden hair, so soft, so bright, clustering in great curls about the brow. The carpet before the painting was much worn, as though a frequent footstep had lingered there, while the glance of love contemplated the angelic countenance.

“A choking sob aroused me from the reverie in which I was lost. The faithful servant was weeping like a child as he looked upon the portrait of his mistress.

“‘Was it like her, Tony?’ I asked.

“‘De berry semblance of poor Missus Elise,’ he answered, as we left the chamber consecrated by so much love and grief.

“I remained but to follow my venerated friend to his grave, and departed from Heath Hall, bearing with me the old desk, which was to me his dying bequest. It was filled with numerous letters, from among which I have selected those which were written by Mr. Heath to his sister, Eda Herbert, and returned to him subsequent to her death. They contain a brief sketch of his sad, strange life, and I will place them at your disposal. Should you desire to publish them, with the accompanying narrative which I have given you, you are at liberty to do so.”

Of this permission I gladly avail myself reader, and sub-

mit them to you, trusting you also may be interested in their perusal.

TO EDA HERBERT.

Villa Mellini, Rome.

DEAR EDA : No longer can your wanderer write to you of the wonders of the eternal city. No more, as I stand in the Coliseum by moonlight, fancy travels back through the long vista of bygone years, until that vast amphitheatre becomes peopled with the beings of my imagination, those who for centuries have rested in the eternal repose of the tomb. I have forgotten all sadness as I gaze upon the crumbling home of the Cæsars, and all fear of the deadly malaria, sweeping over the vast Campagna beyond the walls of Rome.

All is life, light, sunshine, to me now ; for in the song of life an angel-voice takes up the refrain. " Beloved," murmurs the low, soft music of a woman's voice ; and the mantle of her love is folded warm about my heart.

It was on St. Valentine's, the first day of the Carnival, at mid-day, that I for the first time beheld her, this beautiful being who is called Maud Rutherford. She was standing in a balcony which overlooked the Corsa, surrounded by many, but evidently the absorbing object of attention to those who were with her. The whole balcony was festooned with gorgeous drapery, and a profusion of flowers were scattered around, to shower down upon the passers beneath.

Although with a party of English and Americans, I supposed the vision of beauty which first arrested, then riveted my attention, to belong to Italy, so Italian-like was Maud Rutherford in the brilliancy of her large dark eyes, the rich coloring of her cheek and lip, the great purity of features and nobility of form, particularly in the fine outline of her head and shoulders. There was also something foreign in the manner in which she was attired, at once gorgeous and graceful.

A voluminous veil of black lace was thrown over her mag-

nificent braided hair, and confined with a cluster of the delicate blossoms of the almond-tree. A gorgeous robe of brocaded silk, with a crimson scarf folded about her, completed the brilliant picture which she presented to the gazer's eye, while the intense brilliancy of the unclouded sun radiated over all.

Frequently a cavalier riding by would raise his plumed hat, with the graceful, reverential homage which these Italians know so well how to bestow on woman; but a very slight inclination of that proud head was their sole reward, and the stately figure held itself still proudly erect. But, as the excitement deepened, suddenly the lady bared her white hand of its glove, buried it amid the pile of roses by her side, and withdrew a fairy bouquet, which she raised, with a graceful gesture, half-way to her lips, then, bending low over the balcony, cast it to the ground, just before a richly-dressed cavalier, in a mask, who had paused beneath. The cavalier sprang instantly from the saddle, raised the flowers, and, with a lowly reverence, placed them in his bosom. An emotion of indescribable annoyance shot through my bosom, and died again, as I beheld the beautiful stranger calm and unblushing, her face quietly averted from the cavalier who had bent to her with such graceful homage.

Flowers were raining, in a fast-increasing shower, into the balcony from the surrounding besiegers; and her companions, laughing, half wild with merriment, showered down the *confeth* upon all beneath. A little while they remained, and then I saw no more of Maud Rutherford until we met on the last night of the Carnival.

It was nearly midnight when I reached the theatre, and the ball would soon close. Closely masked, I entered a box, and gazed down into the pit, thronged with people. All at once a sweet, familiar voice, close by my side, questioned, "Are you ill, Maud?—Help! she is fainting!" it continued, in an accent of terror, as I turned hastily round, and beheld

the figures of two women closely shrouded in black silk dominoes, hood and mask. The smallest of the two had thrown her arm about her companion for her support, whose head was drooping languidly upon her shoulder. It was the voice of our friend, Louise Ainslie; therefore I felt no hesitation in proffering my assistance, which was gladly received. They had been separated from their party in the dense crowd, and, wearied and suffocated by the oppressive atmosphere, the friend of Miss Ainslie had fainted.

She was perfectly insensible, and, lifting her easily in my arms, I bore her quickly as possible from the theatre. As I did so her hood fell back, revealing the rich braided hair and pale features of the lady of the balcony. The breeze kissed her white lips refreshingly, recalling her to life, while her dark eyes grew bright once more with returning consciousness. The first emotion of surprise and terror at her position languidly gave way with her friend's assurance of safety, and she suffered me to assist her to a carriage.

With the briefly-murmured thanks of the lady mingled my friend's cordial invitation to visit them on the morrow, with the promise of a presentation to her companion, in due form.

You may be quite sure, dear Eda, that I availed myself of Miss Ainslie's permission to visit her the following day. She is wintering with her father in Rome, preparatory to their return to New York in the spring. They have already been abroad a number of years, and Maud Rutherford, who is Miss Ainslie's cousin, joined them last autumn in Paris.

If I was charmed with the wonderful beauty of this young girl, dear Eda, how much more was I fascinated by the soft grace of manner, the bewitching earnestness, with which she greeted me, slightly pale and languid from recent indisposition! There is certainly nothing more fascinating than the languor which occasionally creeps over the brilliancy of haughty beauty, almost imperceptible and inde-

scribable as it is, yet so irresistible in its power; and this nameless emotion is frequently awakened by Maud Rutherford.

Our acquaintance ripened at once into that intimacy which binds wanderers from home when they meet in a land of strangers; and, from mere friendship, the sentiments between Maud and myself have deepened into an affection which I believe to be mutual and indissoluble. And this light ever falling upon us, radiant yet soft, — this atmosphere of sensuous softness, — this blending of much that is grand, beautiful and graceful, in harmonious unison, — is congenial with love.

One feels here as if he could be forever content standing on the Pincio, with the loved one by his side, to gaze on Rome, with the picturesque scenery of its flower-robed Campagna, girded by lofty mountains and steep Sabine hills, glittering in the sunshine of day, or bathed in the silver of the moonlight; but the irresistible impulse of human energy rouses one from these dreams of loveliness, and bears him on to ever-changing scenes.

Aside from the affection which I bear her, Maud Rutherford is the very companion to add to the enjoyment I experience in my search after the wonderful and beautiful here. She has genius to realize art's highest conceptions. She visits not these far-famed temples of colossal beauty in idle curiosity, but that her footsteps may tread where those have fallen of world-wide celebrity. To her, like myself, the Coliseum has been made sacred by the blood of martyrdom, which has flowed in torrents within its precincts, — by the might of Christian fortitude, triumphing over death; and to us both this grand old relic, with its gray buttresses all draped with verdure, lone, desolate and half ruined, is of far deeper interest than the grandeur of St. Peter's.

But already, dear Eda, have I stretched this letter to a most wearisome length; and, with much affection for yourself and Herbert, I close at once.

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

Paris.

DEAR EDA: All is over between Maud Rutherford and myself. I write you this to spare myself the pain of communicating it in person; and I pray you will neither question me nor mention her name when we meet, — which will be very soon, as you perceive I am now *en route* for home.

I could not remain longer in Rome. The place grew wearisome and distasteful to me after the true revelation of Maud's character. So deep had been my enjoyment in her society, it became too painful to linger where I had known so great happiness, and where all objects recalled her perpetually to memory.

To me she is still the embodiment of grace, beauty and genius; but no longer the pure, true, honorable woman; and love dies with this miserable conviction. The affection which she professed to have recognized for the first time for man she had confessed to me before I last wrote to you, Eda; and there followed then many days of serene peace, intense happiness, when no care appeared to cloud her brow, and the momentary intervals of disquiet which had been manifest in our early acquaintance gave way to the most perfect joyousness.

One morning we had ridden out upon the Campagna, some distance from the walls of Rome. Maud was unusually animated, and managed her spirited horse with a grace and dexterity which I have never seen equalled but by you, dear Eda. A travelling carriage, with an English servant mounted on the box, rolled rapidly by. The vehicle passed so close to my companion as to almost brush the skirt of her habit, when a gentleman looked out, raised hastily the cap drawn low over his brow, and would, doubtless, have ordered the driver to stop, had not Maud, with a quick touch of her whip, put her horse into a trot, plainly evincing her intention not to pause for any further recognition.

The plume in her hat partially shaded her face, and she strove to shake it yet lower; but I could perceive that the color which faded slightly from her cheek with the gentleman's salutation gave way to a crimson glow. When this glow had departed, she turned towards me, and, meeting my glance of interrogation, said, in a petulant tone of explanation,

“Francis Rivers, the artist, from England, — a terrible bore, Ralph !”

A disagreeable suspicion that she desired to conceal something concerning her acquaintance with this man from my knowledge flashed over me; but I said nothing, and strove to banish the thought, as unworthy of Maud's character.

As we rode homewards, we again passed the person in question; but he had left his carriage. Once more Maud colored deeply, and bowed nervously, while he regarded her with a mingled expression of surprise and reproach. In his appearance he was a very handsome, although somewhat effeminate man; and simply dressed, with a port-folio beneath his arm, that at once defined his profession.

When I assisted Maud from her saddle, she professed herself fatigued, — her head ached, — she believed she would not accompany Miss Ainslie and myself to the Capitol, as had been proposed.

She was, indeed, looking ill; her face was pale, and she trembled nervously; but it seemed to me, notwithstanding all my reasoning to the contrary, that her illness proceeded from some undefinable and inexplicable agitation, caused by the day's encounter.

On our return, we again met the English artist, and this time he was coming from the direction of Maud's lodgings. Had he been there? I started, and felt appalled by a deep, vague presentiment of some mysterious connection between them. I called my companion's attention to him. She, also, appeared slightly embarrassed, and interrogated me by an earnest look, which I could not comprehend.

"Has not Maud mentioned him to you?" she asked, on my remaining silent. I answered in the negative, and I thought, for a moment, that she was tempted to confide some knowledge in her possession to me; but it was not so.

She merely repeated what Maud had already told me, adding that he had painted a portrait both of herself and Maud, and that he had left Rome the day of the Carnival.

It was sufficient. I recollected now the masked rider who had received Maud's favor the first day I beheld her. I fancied I recognized the cavalier in the artist. A vague, dismal foreshadowing of woe was in my heart; I could not banish it.

With the evening I sought Maud, that she might explain all to me. I felt confident that she would; and was soothed in the belief, though fully impressed that I should even suffer from her explanation. But Maud was not visible. She was suffering from a severe headache, subsequent to a nervous attack, to which she was at times, her cousin told me, subject.

When I left, it was with the intention of returning home. But the extreme beauty of the night, and an undefinable restlessness, induced me to turn my steps in the direction of the Coliseum.

For some time I wandered about, until, wearied, I sat down in the shadow of a broken column, which concealed me from two figures seated in the moonlight.

Before I could rise and move away, on perceiving them, the man raised his hand and withdrew the hood which covered his companion's head, revealing a wealth of braided hair that I believed no woman in Rome possessed but Maud Rutherford. But it could not be Maud — not Maud, there alone, in the loneliness of evening, with another than myself; but — O Heaven, Eda! that I should write it of her! — the haughty head turned slowly round, and the silver moonlight fell over

a pure, classic profile, every line of which was known by heart to me !

“ And you tell me this, and think that I will obey you ? ” said a voice, low and deep, yet full of concentrated passion and despair, the tones of which riveted me motionless to where I stood.

“ You confess that you still love me, Maud Rutherford, yet give yourself to another, and me to despair ! You would sacrifice yourself to this man’s gold ! But you shall not ! I will yet save you. Maud, I will toil like the veriest slave, that poverty shall not gall and debase you by its iron touch. I will labor, with an intensity that shall make me an old man before my prime, for that fame which shall make the name of Rivers worthy of your acceptance.”

He had risen, and stood impassioned before her, full of a proud consciousness of the possibility of his achieving all he promised. But it soon passed away, until the innate majesty of a noble manhood seemed a mockery of the deep woe, the deadly pallor, which became more and more visible with each low word uttered by that silvery voice.

“ Francis, you should love one of these impassioned children of the south. Withdraw your affection from a cold, barren heart like mine ; I should chill its very youth. You taught me once, I confess it, a pretty lesson of sentiment ; but your pupil has a roving, capricious memory, and it played truant in your absence. Ralph will be satisfied with less emotion. Don’t look so wild — so woe-begone ! Forget Maud Rutherford. Destiny will not suffer her to feel for you.”

He raised his head as she ceased, and I wonder she had not turned in shame from that glance of quiet scorn, of calm rebuke.

“ You bid me love another, Maud Rutherford, now that you know that I have nothing to give ; that the rich treasure of human love and tenderness, which God gave me alike with other men, has been taken from my bosom to be wasted

in wanton idleness! If you have forgotten the lesson of womanly tenderness which I sought in its divine pathos to disclose to you, may you be less forgetful of the end of one human heart's joy! I do not desire that it may be a never-ceasing reproach to your future hours of gladness, but a shield between yourself and other true and honorable hearts, that may enshrine you therein as reverently as I have done.

"If destiny will not suffer you to *feel for me*, pride henceforth must teach me forgetfulness of you; and thus let the memory of the past perish!" And from his bosom he drew a bunch of withered flowers, and cast them upon the ground beneath his foot.

There was a laugh, Eda, like the laugh of unhallowed spirits, silver-clear as it was, which rang in my ear; and then Maud Rutherford said, haughtily, "Now that this medley of tragedy and farce is completed, will you be so good, Mr. Rivers, as to lead the way to my carriage?"

With a step stately as her own he passed on, and I gazed after them until the last flutter of her garments was discernible. Then I threw myself back, bowed my face, and wept, — yes, wept, Eda, over the clouded dream, the desecrated love — wept, that in the world there was such deceit; and when I arose the links which bound me to Maud Rutherford were severed forever. Before quitting the spot, however, I stooped to examine an object at my feet. It was a glove, which Maud had dropped. My first impulse was to cast it from me with a motion of abhorrence; the next was to retain it.

The following morning I enclosed it in a note, with only one word therein, — "Coliseum," — and my signature. No answer was ever received, — none was expected. Conscience at once told her that I had been present at her fatal interview. Days afterwards she drove past me as I stood in the Corsa. Our glances met, and both bowed haughtily; she was very pale, and looked thin and unhappy. Since then we have not seen each other.

Now, dear Eda, this is the last time I would speak of her.

I shall follow close upon the receipt of this, — be prepared. The youth who left you has matured into grave manhood. Adieu,

RALPH.

TO-EDA HERBERT.

Virginia.

DEAREST EDA : Your oft-expressed wish is soon to be gratified. Heath Hall will ere long have a mistress, and a most lovely one, believe me ; one who will not pine after the world and its gay frivolities, but enjoy its quiet beauty to the utmost. That which I have sought for hitherto so vainly I have at length discovered in an out-of-the-way place. The blossom budded not by my pathway ; I have searched for and found it in the dim and shadowy woodland.

It was Christmas when I accepted the invitation of my old college friend, Frank Winters, — like myself, a bachelor, — and joined him here at his father's house in Richmond ; and I have remained here ever since ; for, just as I was beginning to long for my quiet home, — having, Eda, entirely unfitted myself, by the past five years' seclusion, for society, — I encountered this sweet treasure of which I am writing.

Frank and myself had started on horseback for a neighboring village, there to join another friend of our youth. Towards night we discovered that we had made a mistake in the road ; and, added to our perplexity, heavy clouds rising in the distance were ominous of a storm. In this emergency we made the best of our way to a fine old country-house in the vicinity, which was just visible through the trees. On a nearer approach, we found it to be almost entirely shut up, and desolate-looking in the extreme. As we rode round to the court in the rear and dismounted, several negroes came out to hold our horses, and learn what were our wants.

We asked who the proprietor of the place was, and, learning it to be a Mr. Ancott, Frank sent one of the men in to his master, to beg the shelter of his roof from the fast-approaching storm. His request was answered by the gentleman in person, politely inviting us to alight and walk in.

We gladly complied, struck by the peculiar gravity, but high-bred courteousness, of our host's manner, which at once placed us at our ease. We were ushered at once into a comfortable chamber, where we proceeded to arrange our toilets, ere we descended to the presence, doubtless, of the ladies of Mr. Ancott's family.

On going down we were shown into a spacious apartment, the windows of which were not yet closed, though a huge fire glowed upon the hearth; a pair of tall silver candlesticks stood upon the mantel-piece lighted, and with the bright glow of the fire diffused a pleasant radiance through the room.

The tea-table, handsomely laid, stood in the centre of the room, evidently awaiting our appearance. Mr. Ancott sat in an arm-chair in one corner, and the ladies were standing near him. One of them he addressed as Mrs. Powers, in presenting Frank and myself; the other he simply designated as his daughter; and by that daughter's side I had the good fortune to procure a seat at table.

We soon discovered that the respectable, middle-aged woman, whom he had called Mrs. Powers, stood in the position of governess to the younger lady. She presided at the head of the table, and was polite and talkative; while Mr. Ancott conversed with an ease and dignity which bespoke him at once no ordinary man. But the young girl — Elise, as she was called — sat with her head slightly drooping, scarcely raising her eyes, but to glance, with a timid, frightened expression, towards her father, when compelled to answer me in the conversation which I addressed to her. But he apparently paid her not the slightest regard, until we arose from the table, when, turning towards us, he desired to be excused for

the residue of the evening, as he had letters of importance to write for the morrow's mail; and, desiring his daughter to entertain his guests, disappeared.

At once the spell which appeared to have hung over the girl with his presence passed away. She lifted her graceful head with girlish freedom, and then that face which, from the first glance, I had thought to be fair, I found to be incomparably beautiful. No longer did she answer me but in monosyllables, but chatted away with the most fascinating girlish vivacity. Ah! how lovely I thought her, in her simple dress of brown merino, with her golden curls, her merry laugh, and frequent clasping of those little hands with enthusiasm! But I never beheld any living being so fragile and ethereal as Elise Ancott; it seemed as though a breath would waft her to heaven.

"What! brown merino and all?" questions this saucy Frank, looking over my shoulder; but even he, Eda, does not think that I exaggerate her beauty.

But I cannot make this a very long letter, and therefore let me hasten to its conclusion.

That night I dreamed of Elise; and it was a pleasant dream. When I awoke in the morning, and heard rain pattering against the windows, I rejoiced silently.

Of course we were not suffered to depart during the continuance of the storm. Three blessed days it lasted; and then we parted — but I was to return again, — ay, and again. Each time of my return, however, the greeting of Mr. Ancott became more distant. But it was too late; Elise had given me her love, and I was strong in the blessed knowledge of its sincerity, — sufficiently courageous in its possession to conquer all obstacles.

To my surprise, when I asked her of her father, he made no opposition; but he was sterner than ever. An impenetrable gloom enshrouds this man, — a gloom mortal eyes cannot pierce. This child of his, who has sprung up into the loveliest

dawn of womanhood, who should fill his heart with proudest joy, he shuns; and she is unfortunately of an organization that requires the gentlest affection, the warmest tenderness. She is fading, she is drooping, without it; but mine now the care, the blessed privilege, to surround her henceforth with all things bright and cheering, to infuse into her being new life and power.

We shall be married soon, and I anticipate, with exceeding joy, the day when I shall install her in our old home. Until then, dear Eda, adieu.

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

Heath Hall, June.

Ah, Eda, once more am I happy; filled with joy pure, ineffable, so purified from all selfishness that you may banish from your thoughts, as unworthy of me, the fear of being supplanted by another in my affection. Think not, O beloved Eda, that the ever-present remembrance of the flower which rests in my bosom will o'ershadow your memory!

I have already told you how, like a botanist rambling through the old woods of Virginia, I came across this sweet blossom blooming alone in a desolate country home; how the sweet flower awoke in my breast an ardent yearning, an intense desire, to transplant it where, in the genial atmosphere of affection, it might expand in strength and beauty—and how I at length succeeded. I would, Eda, that you had been present at the bridal which has imparted to me so much happiness; for the old house was lone and desolate, the night dark and cheerless; the winds murmured and heaven wept. Grieved the elements that the flower was reft from its parent soil? It was barren, and the flower was drooping. I shall never forget the half-hour I awaited the coming of my betrothed in the dim-lighted library. It took her a long time to arrange her toilet; and yet there was no crowd of flatter-

ing friends to dazzle with the beauty of bridal apparel, for Mr. Ancott had desired that we should be wedded with none but the household present.

I fancied it strange that she lingered so long ; it began to seem to me that, in lieu of smiling and blushing over her bridal flowers, she was praying and struggling for strength as for a sacrifice ; and just then the door was thrown open, and cold, white, drooping, she stood upon the threshold, her old black nurse holding a lighted taper above her head. Roses were gleaming in her golden hair, and her bridal veil fell in white misty folds about her ; 'but the long lashes drooped low. Was it a weight of woe, or a strange, undefinable shrinking from the new life opening before the vision of girlhood ?

I hastened to her side, and with whispered words of tenderness awoke pale roses on her cheek, as I led her on to the drawing-room. Amid a blaze of light stood the rector, awaiting our presence. There were spoken a few brief words ; a golden circlet, symbolizing eternal truth, was bound with tender faith upon a slender finger ; together we knelt down, and we who were twain arose one — one through all eternity !

The father touched lightly his child's brow with his speechless lips, but the caress seemed a mockery of paternal love. One by one clustered the negroes of the household silently about her (all were quiet in his presence) ; the glimmer of their white teeth through dusky lips alone answering the tremulous voice of my girl-bride, as she spoke a few kindly words to each, and departed.

Once more Mr. Ancott approached his child, laid his hand heavily upon her delicate shoulder, and, peering beneath the floating lace with his dark, stern eyes, said to her, in a voice whose sternness seems to go echoing on to infinity : " Elise, no star looked through the gloom of midnight on your birth — no sunbeam welcomed your first day on earth ! Fate has lighted for you a meteor ; pray Heaven that the curse of

hereditary frailty extinguish it not!" and, with a cold good-night, he disappeared.

Elise had neither moved or spoken, but she had grown white and rigid.

In the brilliant light of the room the atmosphere was chill and penetrating, and the wind murmured sternly at the windows; but it was not physical suffering that shook that living flower as though exposed to the storm without,—it was the strange, cold oppression which surrounded her. But I folded my arms in warm tenderness about her, crushing the misty laces and glistening folds, while her head drooped wearily upon my breast. "Love me, Ralph!" she pleaded, passionately, "love me, or I shall die!—I cannot exist without love. Love is air, sunshine, vitality, to me! I have been as in a living tomb;—the shadow of death lays ice-like on my life!"

It was the frost of neglect, Eda. As a flower droops when the frost-king breathes upon it, so drooped and paled Elise; but summer suns and heart-beams are reviving her.

While I write to you, she lays in the deep alcove of the south window of our sunny chamber. Her glance wanders from the serene, blue summer sky to me, as though I were fairer to her,—I, the tall dark man! But the flower loves the huge tree which shields it from the blast.

If you were here, Eda, you would then realize, like myself, how angelic is the presence which fills every nook and corner of this old house with radiance. The very flowers to me seem to bud more luxuriantly; the wild bird's song is nearer at hand, fearless of danger in the serenity of this silent sunny home.

For Elise's use, I have added a large octagon wing on the south side of the house, and her taste has adorned it.

When I first brought her here, in answer to my inquiry whether aught should be changed for her gratification, she looked half incredulous; and, when my smile assured her,

confessed that she would like a little sunny boudoir of her own. And her wish, Eda, is fulfilled. In this octagon room of hers everything is *couleur de rose*.

Is it not a singular point in her constitution, this extreme aversion to cold and gloom? I know it to be unconquerable; for, if by chance she is thrown in contact with aught that chills her physically, she will shudder, and grow fearfully white and rigid.

I dread the effect a winter at the north will have upon her; I would take her to Georgia early in the autumn; but she is averse to going amid strangers, and persuades me that a good fire, with her warm-curtained windows, will cheat us mutually into the delusion of a summer atmosphere.

But I shall not hear to her prayer for home life, if she droops with the frost. She is too precious to me, this new-found treasure; and daily she is teaching me the sweet lesson of a deeper love. I imagined, long ago, that I had mastered all the mysteries of this divine sentiment; but each day a deeper knowledge is attained.

Our time is passed with little variety. Still, we weary not, experience nothing of ennui. In the early morning I read to her aloud, while, sitting in the old arm-chair by my side, she busies herself with some pretty feminine employment.

Then we walk amid the shrubbery, and Elise holds her muslin apron for the flowers which I gather for her vases.

I am now teaching Elise to ride; but she will never become an accomplished rider, like yourself, and there are times when I long for a companion who will yield to the exhilarating impulse, and dash wildly on by my side through the woodland. But I cannot feel either impatient towards her, or reproach her for her timidity; for it is only by a great effort that she can even mount the docile little creature I have prepared for her use.

But the chime of the clock in the hall (the dear old clock, Eda, that you used to mount upon a chair, years ago, to wind

up, while close at hand I watched you with eager eye and aspiring heart) is striking the hour appointed for Elise's ride; and I must coax her from the dreamy repose she has been wooing all this bright morning hour.

You will think me absorbed in my own happiness; but I am not moved to forgetfulness of you, Eda. Adieu.

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

Heath Hall, June.

Well, Eda, have you begun to think that my flower claims even the little remnant of time apportioned to you, that your last has laid over a week in my bosom unanswered? Not so, not so, beloved! Elise would take nothing from you, — rather she gives to you; and though the abundance of her affection, it is none the less worthy of acceptance. But yesterday morning this sweet child's eyes dimmed with tears, as she sat in the old chair with her head pillowed on my shoulder, while I read to her, because, as a memory of bygone days swept over me, I laid aside the volume which I held, and told her how you once sat beside me thus; and she accused herself of having stolen into your dear place. With a heart filled with sympathy for you, she could not be brought to realize that you had found even a dearer one than brother.

You write to me that you fear I am making Elise too fragile for life; that when a mother's duties call upon her for firmness and strength, she will be found wanting. You are wrong; for it is but in physical strength she is deficient. I believe that there is a deep-seated firmness and fortitude in her bosom, which trial or suffering will develop. Religion imparts a moral strength more enduring than that born of mere corporeal energy; and in Elise's whole being are planted the very purest and holiest principles of religion. No temptation, however vast, could sully the innate purity of her spirit,

even though she might droop and pale from earth in the struggle.

But she is gaining strength beyond my most sanguine expectations in this bright month of June. Much of her former timidity as regards riding has vanished. I think, however, that this change may be attributed to my ardent praise of your horsemanship ; for one day, while we were riding in the woodland, Elise barely able to keep pace with me, I pointed to the great oak far ahead, and with enthusiasm spoke of the day when we last raced in those woods, with that old oak for our goal, the leaves of which were to wreath the winner's brow. How luxuriantly then, Eda, streamed your dark curls in the breeze sighing in the woodland, as you rode past me, and wheeled your pony, with a saucy laugh, beneath those giant boughs ! Still, darling, there echoes on my ear the joyous laugh pealing forth as you marked the awkward endeavors of these clumsy fingers to weave into a garland the green and glossy leaves.

With a faint color on her cheek, Elise listened to my description of this ride. And once more by this hand was a fair head crowned with the green oak-leaves ; but I whispered a gentle rebuke of her recklessness.

"She was too precious."

"Was not Eda also precious ?" she questioned.

"Ah ! but not like you, Elise. I knew that another than myself would some day claim her, and I must give her up ; but you, Elise — never !"

"Only to God !" she answered, thoughtfully : and a strange, undefinable pain shot through my heart.

Ah, Eda, beautiful in its joyousness, holy in its peace, is the life which I daily lead. "Thou art too blessed for a wanderer from the kingdom of the All-Powerful," whispers some spirit in my ear. Be it voice of angel or demon, I know not ; but it casts a shadow over my heart. It will win its way, with sombre import, to my soul, in the sunniest hour ; and

then I hasten to her side, and gather her in the clasp of my strong arm.

Do I sin in this wild love, this passion for God's creature, when in its impetuosity I forget not to bless the Creator of the happiness which is vouchsafed me? No, Eda, it cannot be!

But a sweet voice is calling to me from the garden, and I must close a letter which would be wearisome and dull to you, were I not convinced that even Arthur Herbert has never won from me the loving inquisitiveness of your girlhood, which was wont to penetrate, in the days of our youth, every recess of the heart of

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

Heath Hall, July.

The roses of June were in their glory when I last wrote to you, but their leaves now lie withered upon the turf. Days passed into weeks, weeks into months, alone mark the season to me, so brief the interval seems since I brought hither my bride. I should mourn over the swift passing of these bright days to the abyss of the past, did not the future unroll, in the ever-increasing vigor of Elise's health, the promise of the same tranquil happiness.

Five months ago to-day we were wedded; and here, where scarce a spire of grass was discernible, the rich harvest of the hay-maker now loads with fragrance the air, and our joy has grown apace with the luxuriance of nature. But we smile when we remember that a shadow shall draw near, a cloud shall settle down and obscure the glory of gorgeous summer, while no frost can wither the beauty of the floweret Love blossoming in our hearts.

You never vex me, Eda; but you win a smile when you ask, in your quaint, serious way, if we have no other duty than to live thus for ourselves alone, — if I cannot perceive a duty towards society, my fellow-beings, to execute. Ah! I

perceive I have not yet been able to make you comprehend truly our life ; — I write you its poetry, nothing of its prose.

Elise I perceive you regard but as a spoilt, beautiful child, who I am encouraging in her extreme sensitiveness, that I may enjoy the pleasure of shielding, guarding from all annoyance. You fear that when I have succeeded in incapacitating her to endure all trial, she will, in the end, weary me by her helplessness, and rouse me from the tranquillity which is unnatural to a vigorously-constituted man, like me.

You think, too, that then I shall require a spirit more congenial with the awakened vigor of manhood. O, Eda, how difficult it will be for me to make you — you, with your exuberant spirits, your high health — realize that this girl, serene and ethereal in appearance as she is, is capable of emotions as deep and endurable, of performing her duties with as much resolution, as yourself !

But, to answer your first question. You advise me to take this creature of impulse and affection, this artless child of nature, into the world, — to throw her, enthusiastic, unsuspecting as she is, into the midst of such beings as Maud Rutherford, — to open eyes hitherto blind to the hypocrisy, the conventionalisms, of society. And for what purpose, Eda, must she resign her happy home-life, that the influence of one pure heart may fall a chance sunbeam upon the crowd ?

You think Elise should know more of life's actualities before she is called upon to prepare human hearts for its struggles and its strife. Eda, I would not, to benefit all mankind, sacrifice one iota of my young wife's ignorance of what comprises life as it is in the world's acceptance of the term ; call me selfish, believe me such, — anything better than to contaminate her.

It is not Elise's beauty, not her graceful enchantments, which bind my love ; but this child-like unconsciousness of sin.

Secluded as is the life we lead, it is yet not wholly divested

of good will and charity towards man. By the servants of our house Elise is idolized, and in the country round, where her unostentatious charity has been received by many.

Since her marriage she has received, from time to time, letters from Mr. Ancott. They are usually brief, and evince little affection; but to-day one has arrived more affectionate in its tone;—perchance his child's happiness begins to awaken an echo in the paternal breast.

Of her mother Elise has no remembrance, as she died in her infancy; but some strange mystery evidently clings to her memory.

For to-day, dear Eda, farewell.

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

Heath Hall, October.

Eda, I am very weak! I have fancied myself strong, but I am not. In the sunshine of prosperity I was very confident and vain of my strength, but with the first blast of adversity I am bowed low in bitter despair.

Eda, a tempest has bent the head of my beautiful flower; clouds have crept over the horizon of our life. Fool have I been to dream serenely on in my blind infatuation, until the blow came all at once, heavily, and with acutest pain.

I had been married eight months,—yes, not quite a year,—when one morning, while Elise yet slept, I went into the garden to gather a handful of the last flowers of autumn, the leaves of which were already crisped by the frost. I thought to lay them by her pillow, to greet her on awakening. The closed door of her chamber barred my entrance. I tapped softly, saying “Elise, it is I!” There was a moment's silence; then she answered, “Go away, Ralph!” I obeyed, thinking her maid was with her; but I met the maid below, and then knew that my wife must be alone. I was surprised; it was not Elise's wont to refuse me admittance; but I con-

tented myself with leaving the bouquet at her door, and entered the library, and took up a book. I remained there until Tony summoned me to breakfast. I expected to join Elise in the breakfast-room ; but she was not there. She came in soon, however, and took her seat at the table, looking pale and languid. She spoke seldom during the breakfast, though I did all in my power to cheer and amuse her. When she arose, she approached the fire, and spread her chilled hands to the blaze, standing there, with her soft, warm, crimson dressing-gown sweeping about her, with her fair, child-like countenance clouded by a vague melancholy. When I approached her, imagine my amazement—she repulsed me—Elise, my flower ! my darling !—not angrily, but sorrowfully. I stood silent, gazing mutely upon her, when tears began to steal down her white cheeks.

I was so much astonished, Eda, that I experienced profound embarrassment ; but, realizing that there was no one but myself to comfort her, I felt it a duty to conquer my reluctance. So I drew her to my knee, made her rest her little face in my bosom, and proposed to send for my motherly Eda to care for her.

She had never alluded to the new life quickening into being at her heart ; and she sprang up instantly, with her hands folded over her bosom as one in pain, and began to plead, in a strange, incoherent way, with me,—with me, who had never required more than an intimation of a wish of hers to fulfil it. And what, think you, was the burden of Elise's prayer ?—Freedom ! It seemed that I had wearied the poor child with my care ; she had felt like a captive bird, whose every note its master claimed.

“Suffer me, O Ralph, for a few days, for a little while, to be a girl again. Keep far from me ; do not look upon me ; give me quiet solitude ! I have never experienced freedom. He used to watch over me in coldness and anger ; you have done so in love. But I would so like to be a girl—a free,

unconstrained girl, for one little week ! Are you angry with me, Ralph ? ”

Angry with her ! How could I be, because a girlish caprice had taken possession of her mind ? Yet, had the fancy occurred to her at any earlier period, I would have rendered at once ready compliance with her request ; but it was so inconceivably strange to plead thus for the semblance of girlhood with another condition but a little way off.

“ How can *you* be a girl, Elise ? ” I asked, with something of impatience, as my glance rested upon her. She comprehended me at once, crimsoned brow and bosom, and left me hastily. I was grieved ; I felt wounded by her conduct ; but I soon remembered that it was wrong for me to experience anger born of a woman’s whim, and I went out in search of her.

She was not in her octagon room ; neither was she in her chamber ; but, as I passed the drawing-room door, which was ajar, I heard a deep sigh, and went in. A pile of dark drapery lay upon one of the sofas, only dimly seen in the shadowy light of the room. I approached ; it was Elise, weeping, weeping passionately, and for the first time since she had been mine. I besought her to go with me to her boudoir, for the air there was damp, and she was icy cold ; but she only wept the more. So, without saying another word, I lifted her in my arms, as I would have lifted a child, and carried her there, placing her upon a couch, where the sun’s rays fell brightest. Then, seating myself by her side, I spoke seriously with her.

“ Elise, this is all very childish. I look for more of womanly dignity in you now. Do you not comprehend me ? You must yield your childishness now.”

She had ceased to weep ; her blue eyes were raised to mine with something like terror. She strove to withdraw herself from my encircling arm. For a moment a throb of anger beat through my heart. I sprang up, and with hur-

ried step, traversed the apartment. When I turned, Elise was passing from the room. I was angry but for the moment; strange, incomprehensible as was her conduct, I could not remain angry with her. But through all that long day I did not seek her.

Early in the evening, as I sat before the library fire, with no other light than its beams, a woman's silken robe trailed slowly over the floor, and Elise nestled down by my side, without a word, her golden curls falling about me. A pang of remorse for my neglect during the day shot over me; I stretched forth my hand, and lifted her to my knee. Like a drooping flower her head fell upon my broad chest, the red lips sought my bearded cheek, and to the murmured lullaby of love-words she sank asleep. Calm, tranquil as an infant, she slept, a faint sigh alone trembling at intervals on the deep silence.

As the fire-light fell over her, I fancied there was a dark circle about the closed lids, around the small mouth an expression of pain. She had always seemed so fragile that I could never endure to think of suffering in connection with her. Troubled thoughts came sweeping over me; a dim presentiment of future woe, in which she had part. But I strove to think that I, the powerful man, could shield her, the frail child; for a mere child she seemed to me, though I that very day bade her put childish thoughts from her forever. I endeavored to think it was the shadow of our first difference, my first harshness towards her, that pressed upon my spirits; but the fancy had no weight. A denser gloom seemed brooding over me, and just then the thin little white hands folded themselves over her bosom, and she smiled so joyously, so radiantly, that I bowed my head involuntarily to those wreathing lips. But they were whispering "Willie! darling Willie!" again and again, and each time in softer tones. I longed to awaken her, and learn who was this Willie, this childish name, which in her sleep she murmured with such an

expression of tenderness. But the smile faded, the lips became compressed, the smooth brow ruffled; great tears stole out and trembled upon her cheeks; she whispered sorrowfully of her southern home, and awoke with a troubled expression.

“Were you dreaming, Elise, darling?” I questioned; but she was looking about her with the same troubled look, as if in search of some one who she fancied present, and not quite comprehending where she was.

All through that night she would sigh and murmur in her restless sleep; but when, with a certain firm tenderness, I would speak to her, she would become at once momentarily tranquil.

While she yet slept I ordered my horse saddled, and in the early morning rode over to consult Dr. Francis; for I felt that Elise was now actually ill. He reassured me, and promised to drop in, as though casually, during the day. I rode rapidly homeward, desiring to return before she left her chamber, as I was unwilling for her to learn the cause of my absence. As I dashed hastily around to the back entrance, to my infinite chagrin and surprise I beheld her standing on the north balcony opening from the drawing-room. There had been a heavy frost during the night, and the morning air was keen and penetrating. She had neither mantle or shawl on to protect her from its influence.

I motioned her to go in; but she paid me no heed, and remained gazing down, with that strange expression which had of late been growing on her.

“Elise, are you mad, to expose yourself thus?” I said, almost angrily, as I approached her. She shivered, passed her hand across her forehead, and raised her lips, blue with the cold, to my cheek. The act annihilated all sternness on my part. I drew her arm within mine, and led her to the breakfast-room. The fire burnt cheerily on the hearth, and I made her sit down before the bright blaze, and chafed her

numb hands, while the color began to glow upon her cheek, her own sunny smiles to gather about her lip.

As the blood began to circulate more swiftly, she grew animated, and chattered away to me, until it seemed as though the whole room was filled with the soft music of her voice.

When breakfast was brought in she dismissed Tony, and, murmuring something about having been very petulant the previous day, insisted upon waiting on me herself. Thus, by many little trifling ways, she appeared to entreat my forgiveness — to atone for the past. Once more Elise was herself.

When the breakfast things were removed she took her sewing, and, sitting in the old arm-chair by my side, begged me to read to her. I took up a volume of Spenser, but she replaced it with a translation of Petrarch's impassioned verse.

While seated there, even as I read memory wandered back to the days when you had sat beside me, as Elise did ; and I recalled how you once leaned your head upon my shoulder, and read with me. You were full of exuberant life ; you were impassioned as the poet's conception ; you were keener in your comprehension of bard and author's revelation than myself, and led my spirit upward with the flight of your own ; but Elise was with me frail, languid and silent.

Heaven pardon me ! I believe I was almost weary, that morning, of the blessed child's helplessness.

The morning had nearly passed, when I perceived that she was listening intently. Then I heard a step coming through the hall, which I easily divined to be the doctor's ; but, when he entered, I arose and greeted him, as if for the first time that day.

While he remained Elise was evidently agitated and nervous. I think he noticed her uneasiness, for he rose soon and bade her good-morning, but not until he had said, with a significant glance towards myself, " You must be very complaisant and good to this delicate little flower, which blossoms in this cold north home of yours."

When I followed him to the hall again, he repeated that I must seek but to amuse and gratify Elise in every whim in which she could possibly be indulged. When I returned, she questioned impatiently if he had gone; and when I answered in the affirmative, added, "Don't go for him again, Ralph."

It is now several weeks since this occurred, and her conduct since has been capricious as the sunshine of an April day. But even with her unreasonable waywardness there is mingled so much of unfathomable sadness that I experience only uneasiness; I cannot be angry with her. That she struggles with this sorrow which oppresses her I cannot doubt; for there will be hours when she will be brilliant in her almost wild merriment.

For some unknown reason, she has conceived so great an aversion to Dr. Francis that I have thought it best not to again desire him to visit her; although she has so changed that I tremble to look at her. If you, Eda, can leave your home, will you not come, at my entreaty, and see if you can discover what it is which preys thus on the happiness of my beloved? Your womanly tact may win her to unburden her spirit to you. Come, then, Eda, once more to your old home, — you, with both physical and mental strength combined in blessed unity, making you a support for the weak. Adieu.

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

November.

I shall not now importune you to come to us; neither do I regret that the duty which you owe at home has kept you from complying when I called upon you for assistance, — much less reproach you. Your presence is unneeded. I was mistaken; you could not have comforted Elise. God alone has the power.

By some strange, unhappy fluctuation in her destiny and mine, she has ceased to love me, and without palpable cause.

She upbraids herself none the less, and in secret accuses her own heart of falsehood towards me. She has found, probably, as womanhood has rolled upon her, that there is an ideal in her heart of which she has been unconscious hitherto, and the realization of which has not yet been revealed to her. She dreads lest it be, and she find herself chained without the possibility of freedom. The thought haunts her, — has become a mania, which she has not the strength to wrestle with.

When her suffering first became apparent in an irrepressible mournfulness of manner, I reproached myself with having immured her youth and beauty in this dim old house ; but I perceive now that the catastrophe which she dreads would have been elsewhere consummated. In the many who would have crowded about her in adoration of her loveliness, she would, doubtless, have found one congenial to her youth, her acute delicacy of organization, — more so, at least, than the dark-browed man, nearly twice her years, whom she now calls husband. The very impetuosity of my affection has, I fear, repulsed her. I perceive now the utter falsity of the expectation of perfect happiness ; the semblance of it is but a mockery, to lure us on to misery.

But, in justice to Elise, I must suffer you to form no erroneous opinion of her. She is all that is pure, truthful and good, though overwhelmed by her misfortune. No act of hers, no conscious word, has revealed the truth wittingly to me ; nothing but the spirit of unrest, haunting even her slumbers, has given it voice. One night I watched her sadly as she slept, when all at once she began to speak in broken, incoherent words ; but sufficient was audible to convince me of the truth. All her petulance has now disappeared, and an ineffable sweetness of manner has taken its place ; but it is blended with a melancholy so profound as to fill me with despair.

In comparison with the beauty and happiness which this home possessed during the summer months, the contrast is great indeed. The trees are stripped of their foliage, and

wave their naked branches mournfully in the chill autumnal air.

We have a visitor now with us. You will remember the young artist Rutherford, who painted the much-admired portrait of his cousin Maud. When I looked upon the superb beauty of that well-remembered face, but which bore the impress of worldliness and pride, the vision of the fair, pure lineaments of Elise rose before me, and I desired that the same pencil should portray her also. At the time, he was much engaged; but the week past he has come to us, and, to his infinite surprise, recognizes an old friend in Elise.

His presence evidently gives her pleasure. They talk together of their childhood, and bygone memories withdraw her from contemplation of the future.

Through the brightest hours of the morning she sits to him in her boudoir; and the face, Eda, which grows in beauty on his canvas, the world might worship in its wondrous loveliness. But ah, Eda! it is a different type of beauty from that I once dreamed of. The large eyes beam with a brilliancy half shadowed by their drooping lashes; tears have evidently faded the deep rose from the cheek, which is wasted and transparent; and bygone incidents, which Rutherford recalls to memory, make the sweet lips tremulous with feeling.

The artist worships this creation of his genius. He is lost in his art. Wrapt in his own dreams, he perceives not that a secret sorrow elevates and deepens the beauty of the divine countenance which he portrays.

Evidently unconscious of the connection once existing between his cousin and myself, he said to me this morning, while I watched his progress, "Fortune has been to me beneficent in giving to my pencil the beauty of two such women as your wife and my cousin to portray. One is the beauty of woman; the other, that of an angel." And he bent with enthusiasm over his canvas.

Write to me, Eda. Your love will soothe, strengthen your

brother, and pierce with a beam of sunlight the darkness of his destiny. In deepest sorrow,

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

November.

More than ever, Eda, do I now require the consolation of your affection ; for an eternity of sorrow has swept upon me. I am like one alone on a desert, boundless, interminable, surrounded by utter desolation. In the far-off vista of the future could I but behold one budding flower of hope, however pale and wan a thing, the life-blood which now seems to stagnate at my heart would start convulsive, and burn in exquisite pain through every vein. O ! the anguish which knows no bitterness, no other sense than that of desolation ! It is such emotion that I now experience.

The realization of the ideal of Elise's heart is revealed in the person of this child of genius, — this young artist-boy. The love which was not for me, the world-seared man, has sprung into a bright, strong flame, kindled by his presence. Would that he were less innocent of this spontaneous lighting and quickening into existence all the woman of *her* being, that passionate indignation against him might melt the ice congealing the life-blood at my heart ! But no ; he came guileless of his creative power, — still he knows it not. He dreams not, as his brush adds yet another touch of beauty to the beloved lineaments before him, that it is the heavenly effulgence of spirit beaming in those soft eyes, the emotion of the woman's heart perceptible in the trembling lip, which he worships, which he bends over in silent ecstatic wonder, and believes his own creation.

Should he awake to sudden consciousness of the truth, I believe he would recoil in abhorrence of himself. Pure and spiritual of soul, there appears to appertain to him nothing of that sensuousness or grossness of spirit adherent to most men. He could not endure, unveiled of all disguise, the

naked conviction of loving one whom destiny had already consigned to another; he would recoil from it in terror. But, stealing like a dream of rare beauty, it rushes upon his artist imagination; unrealized, it intoxicates his soul. What to him is invisible, is too apparent to me; and I dread his awakening to the terrible reality, not for his sake, — no, Eda, it is not in human nature to feel for those who injure us so deeply, even though it be unwittingly, — but for her who I, in my selfishness, bound in her youth to my maturity.

The portrait is nearly completed. I gaze upon it with mingled adoration and despair. Elise's glance I shun. I dare not meet it; it would madden me with its grief. I execrate Rutherford when absent for the profound sadness which he has perpetuated in this unhappy painting. But when he confronts me with his serene, open brow, his dark hazel eye, fearless and truthful, — the mirror, as it were, of a pure spirit, over whose waters ripple but the sunshine of beauty, — and I turn my conscious glance upon the turbid waves of jealous passion and angry doubt surging through my own being, I experience only shame and self-rebuke.

Yesterday Elise gave him a last sitting. I thought her alone, and entered her boudoir. He was bending over his easel, with his glance resting upon the canvas; both were silent, and unaware of my entrance. Unwilling to disturb them, I seated myself in a remote corner, without speaking. For a long time they remained mute, until at length, with a breath so deep-drawn as to approach a sigh, Rutherford laid aside his brush, and, taking from the table a bouquet of flowers which I had myself gathered for Elise that morning, he selected a few half-opened buds, and handed them to her, as he said, with a faint smile,

“It is a long time since I have brought you flowers. In our old home, Elise, I gathered you fairer ones than these.”

A heavy tear fell over his companion's cheek; she raised the flowers to her lips, and her glance to his. It was wild

and sad, and she answered, softly, "Go, Willie! he will be very angry if he learns this. He will not suffer you to be even a brother to me,—you whom I love—love so dearly, Willie!"

I could not see his face when these terrible words fell upon my ear; but I beheld him start, and heard him say, in earnest, imploring tones, "O, Elise! are you so unfortunate? God help you!" and I stole out noiseless as I had entered. But my brain was burning. I pressed my hands to my ears to shut out the words which were echoing there over and over again; but it was useless. I could not endure that the same roof should cover William Rutherford and myself.

I went out into the woodland. The autumn sun shone brightly; it penetrated with its glory even the recess in the forest's heart where the pine-trees cast a shadow below. But I heeded not the checkered rays of golden light streaming sunnily over the crisped and withered leaves upon which I lay, recalling the past, the happiness of which mocked alike the present and the future. I recalled the day when I first marked the shadow come over her. I remembered the name which she had uttered in the restlessness of a troubled slumber; and then a dreary, miserable conviction of deceit on her part, and bitter treachery towards myself, began to dawn upon me. She had feigned an affection which she had never experienced. That there was nothing pure, nothing reliable, upon earth, I began then fully to realize. I strove to consider calmly the duty which I owed both to her and myself. That we must part, I understand; I have no wish now to the contrary. Perchance, in deceiving me, Elise has also deceived herself. In her soul I yet believe her to be pure; that she has but yielded now, for the first time, to a momentary weakness.

She misunderstands me, and, accordingly, is unjust. They were unkind words she uttered against me; but, for the love I have borne her, and bear her still, I can forgive her. A

little while, and when our child is born I will depart from hence. She will forget, in the consolation of her child's presence, her present sorrow. I have lost all anger towards Elise; for I perceive how resolutely she secludes herself from Rutherford, as though in atonement of the moment's weakness. He, too, seems oppressed with a secret unhappiness; he has not the expression of one who triumphs in the knowledge of a return of affection on the part of the adored one.

Once or twice he has sought to address me. What he can dare to say to me I cannot divine; but I have an instinctive fear lest it be of her, and I check him, — I turn from him. I could not endure that.

Eda, to you I have poured out my whole soul. But do not offer me either sympathy or pity; only increase the tenderness of your affection, and thus furnish the only balm for the heart of

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

December.

It is the last hour — ah! the dying moment of the old year. With the passing of the fierce winter storm which has swept the earth has fled dark suspicion, frantic and miserable jealousy. Over the darkness of my spirit has broken a gleam of light, — light as pure as the snow-flakes which cover, in one vast white robe, the dark bosom of the earth.

The chime of the old clock on the stairs announces the birth of the new year; and simultaneously the moon, breaking forth from a cloud, floods the window-panes, and falls upon the floor in tremulous rays of silver light.

Is not this breaking of glorious light on the deep gloom of midnight an omen of good to us all? Hark! it comes; there is no mistaking it. The silent chambers and empty halls of this old house echo as in gladness a sound which, for long years, has slept with the past; which has not echoed therein since even I, a frail infant, lay upon the bosom of my

mother. It is the low, faint wail of a new life. O passing tempest ! O glancing moonbeams, and serene new year ! Be thou harbingers of joy to the young traveller who, in the spotlessness of infancy, has joined the pilgrims of earth.

"Thou art a father !" fell upon my ear four weeks ago to-day ; but the blessed sentence found echo in a heart closed, I deemed for aye. The first pressure of my lips on the soft cheek of my child awoke electric into passionate life a father's love and tenderness. There was then something yet to live for, a love which might yet be mine. With such wild earnestness, such intense joy, did I press the frail thing to my heart, that old Hester took him hastily from me.

She was Elise's nurse, and has come to tend her child's infancy.

"Missus Elise would like to see massa ?" said the old woman, interrogatingly. I doubted it, but passed through the nursery to her chamber.

In the dim light I could see the wan, white face. In deep repose the long dark lashes swept the thin cheek, and the golden hair lay dishevelled about her. No sigh, not a breath, broke the profound silence ; but a heavenly calm was diffused over the whole countenance. Moment after moment I stood, and gazed upon her, while memory recalled the hours of our happiness, — the profession of her early love for me, with a conviction of its existence, — and, as I looked, a change crept over her, though not a muscle stirred. An irresistible impulse seized me. I clasped her hands ; they were icy cold and damp. I believed death's shadow was on her, and a strange revolution of feeling came over me. The love which had frozen at my heart gushed forth in warmth and passionateness ; her broken faith was forgotten. A warm kiss lingered on her lips, a despairing voice murmured, "Die not, leave me not, Elise ! Awake, awake to love, to joy, to life !" She shuddered as one convulsed, and I held her in strong, warm clasp until it passed.

“Our child, Ralph!” came softly from her parting lips; and her glance, full of unutterable emotion, was raised to mine.

Old accents, old glances of tenderness! Was I dreaming still, or was the past all madness, all delusion? I scarce dared hope that I was not deceived, and yet clung passionately to the belief.

For days I was not suffered to approach her; and I submitted meekly to the decree, with a humility which was deepening with the belief of some mysterious delusion on my part.

And, O, Eda, most grievously have I indeed sinned, in my blind wilfulness, against this poor, suffering child!

Madness has now been inherent for three or four generations in the female branch of Elise’s family, invariably manifesting itself shortly previous, and passing with the birth of a child.

From Elise’s nurse I have learned the sad story of her unhappy mother, and the cause of her father’s austere and isolated life.

At the period of her marriage she was a brilliant belle, but loving and impulsive as a little child. Vain of the admiration bestowed on his wife, Mr. Ancott had encouraged the gay life which she led, until, at length, with his almost idolatrous affection there mingled a jealous doubt of one whose adoration of the beautiful Mrs. Ancott became too apparent to escape him, although wholly unnoticed by its object. He determined to withdraw her at once from the notoriety and danger of the attention which, with unconscious levity, she was encouraging; and, on her remonstrance at being forced, in the very height of the gay season, to leave all and depart with him to his quiet country-home in Virginia, he unwisely gave way to a burst of angry passion.

Then the indulged creature of affection, who knew no will but her own, in the pride of her woman’s heart revolted at the cruel doubt of her husband.

The passionate indignation, the cold scorn, of the insulted wife, instead of allaying, only confirmed his suspicion of her coldness towards him ; and with feelings of mingled love and bitterness they departed for their home. A severe cold taken on the journey, and wilfully disregarded by the unhappy wife, brought on a fit of illness ; and from that time until the birth of Elise, — some months subsequent, — Mrs. Ancott gave evidence of unmistakable insanity, though varied by many lucid intervals, in which she gave way to the deepest despondency. In her delirium she would recall the scenes of the happy past ; and then the name of one whom she had thought of with little interest previous to her misery, would linger in accents of tenderness upon her lips.

Soon after her child's birth, when in the full possession of her reason, a few days prior to her death, she called Hester to her, and bade her watch carefully the motherless child which she was to rear, and forever keep from her the secret of her mother's fate.

It was no secret, however, to those who had been with her. Mr. Ancott remained alone wilfully blind to the truth.

Dr. Rutherford — young Rutherford's father — attended the unfortunate one, and to his earnest endeavors during her life to convince Mr. Ancott of the nature and probably temporary length of her affliction, was to be attributed the extreme aversion which he conceived, on his wife's death, to the physician, and which was manifested in after years when he learnt that the young boy who brought Elise flowers and fruit was the son of Dr. Rutherford.

Thus the entire household, with whom the boy was a great favorite, were forbidden to encourage his presence ; but still at intervals he came, and as Elise grew into girlhood he would accompany her in long rambles through the woods.

When a rumor of their intimacy first reached the ear of Mr. Ancott, he at once summoned his daughter to his presence ; and so completely did his sternness overawe the elo-

quence with which the poor child sought to extenuate her companion from all blame, that she never ventured thereafter to disobey his commands.

Convinced by Hester's revelation, and the addition of Dr. Francis' testimony, who ventured, when the crisis was passed, to communicate to me that he had, from the first, divined a suspicion of the truth, I awaited with intense impatience the day on which I was to be admitted to Elise's presence.

I could not realize fully how visionary, indeed, had been my doubt of her faith, until she herself said, as, standing by my side, she gazed from her window into the barren garden, "All seems like a dark, troubled dream to me, Ralph, since I last gazed on yonder trees, robed in the foliage of summer."

"Suffer it to pass, like all sorrowful dreams, my wife," I answered, filled with contrition for the wrong I had done her. She looked at me, sighed softly, and turned to her child.

Can it be that a dim memory of my unkindness yet haunts her?—a knowledge that my faith was not quite strong enough to support my love in the hour of darkness and trouble, which oppresses her?

She speaks not of William Rutherford; makes no allusion to his having been here, or the portrait of herself hanging in the octagon room, as yet unvisited. A mother's love seems to have matured her whole being. She knows no fatigue, no weakness, when her child requires her care. And yet there is nothing approaching to idolatry in her affection for her infant; it is a love so firm, so tender, so religious, that the angels in heaven may look down upon it in reverence. She communes much with her own spirit and her Creator. I am conscious there is diffused over her expressive countenance a holy serenity, when I come to her unexpectedly, as she sits quietly with her boy on her knee. If she was my ideal of a wife in the few happy months which followed our bridal, how much more is she so now as a mother!

She is very quiet; so are we all; but it is the serenity of

perfect peace. Our first era of wedded life was like radiant sunlight; that which follows the storm has the holiness, the purity, of moonlight.

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

February.

Our child has fallen asleep! Elise will not suffer me to say it is dead. She bids me tell you "our little one has gone to sleep with the angels." After I last wrote to you, its mother's watchful eye perceived that even until then, as it grew in vigor and beauty, it began to droop and fade.

It was Elise's voice which first told me that our boy must go; that God was calling him to be an angel in heaven; and even while she bent above him, and strove to awaken the dying life, she taught me to say, "God's will be done!" But over the little waxen hands which she folded on her child's bosom, as his last breath fell upon her cheek, rained the warm tears, speaking a mother's desolation.

When from her child she turned again to me, there seemed to be yet another and closer reünion.

To-day, for the first time, she has looked upon her portrait. She was leaning on my arm, when I led her once more to her boudoir, illumined by the morning sun, the air sweet with the breath of flowers, her bird singing melodiously in its cage. The tightening of her hand upon my arm revealed the sudden pang as she recalled the treasure which she had received and parted from in the interval.

A sigh parted her lip, but it was in sadness; no bitterness mingled with its sorrow. But suddenly her glance fell upon the painting before her. With a convulsive start she stood a moment gazing upon it; once she passed her hand across her forehead, once she slightly bowed her head in that attitude which denotes a moment of intense thought, as though she were striving to recall some bygone memory.

At length she turned slowly to me.

"Who painted that, Ralph?" she questioned, in a frightened, troubled voice.

"William Rutherford, Elise," I answered, involuntarily, in the moment's embarrassment.

Twice, ere she spoke, I beheld the small white hands close and part again with a gesture of intense pain and despair, as she stood with averted face; then again she turned round, and most lovely, Eda, even in its deep woe, was that young face.

"It was, then, no troubled dream of a fevered brain!" she began, with her hand upon her heart. "I have been mocking my own reason in the vain belief that in the delirium of long weeks you comprehended my misfortune. But with that name light breaks upon the darkness. I was mad, and you could not see it. I knew when it crept slowly upon me, as on my poor mother. I watched in horror its approach; in secret prayed, when its spell was not upon me, to be reserved from its misery. There were sane moments, which I now recall, amid all the chaos of those weary days, when I awoke to know you changed, to behold you distant and cold. I have been fancying that I had dreamed these fancies in the wildness of my delirium; but now I know it all, — you doubted *me*, — me, O Ralph!" She covered her face with her hands, for in moments of such profound grief we are unwilling any one but God should look upon us.

Terribly rebuked, agonized by that first sudden outbreak of innocent sorrow, I could not at first answer her; but when, looking up, she said to me, with a faint, painful smile, "Why have you changed, — why recall the old love? Do you think that I am mad now, Ralph, and has pity usurped the place of anger?" her words, deeply as they wounded, served to arouse me.

"O, Elise," I said, "pardon me! You cannot know how terribly I also have suffered. It was my adoration of you, the consciousness of my own unworthiness in all things of your affection, that led me, in the hour of our first difference, to

believe that the love of one like me could never suffice for your happiness. In your unconsciousness, beloved one, you withdrew ever further from me; and I, in my blindness, could not perceive the cloud which had enveloped you. And, O! Elise, in your delirium you gave utterance to strange words falling from the lips of a wife; and I knew not then that they were idle words of illness."

"I have no right to upbraid, Ralph; I was wrong, even in the first bitterness, to have done so; you have more than myself to forgive," she answered, meekly; and we are never again to allude to the past.

I can perceive no perceptible change in her, only that she is become more subdued. There are times when I find her weeping in solitude; but it is a mother's grief for the loss which she has sustained in her child, and for a season she must be suffered its indulgence.

That we are both very sad, you must suppose, after what has past; but we are not unhappy.

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

March.

You will be surprised to receive a letter from me here; but we have already been three weeks in New York.

After I last wrote to you, Elise grew so ill that Dr. Francis became imperative in his order for a change of scene for her; and, to my surprise, Elise acquiesced at once. I think I comprehend her reason. She dreads the return of that delirium which she has so much reason to fear. But a wonderful change has become apparent in her since she has been here. Not only has she cast off all mental depression, but she has also physically improved; a brilliant color glows upon her cheek, and her eyes beam, at times, so radiantly as to attract many a glance of wonder and admiration.

I should be surprised by the avidity with which one hitherto so retiring and reserved has plunged at once into the

gayest society, were it not that I believe her to be influenced by the same reason which brought her here. And I do not object; it may dissipate her sadness, and I myself have no apprehension of her fears being realized.

There have been times when I have pictured to myself the excitement which Elise would create in society; and I cannot but experience a certain degree of pride, as I mark her so courted and admired as she is by all, yet mingling guileless, artless as a child, amid the world.

Last night my wife and Maud Rutherford met. It was at a brilliant party, and Elise, to whom the past is known, gazed on her with interest, and speaks with enthusiasm of her beauty. I fancy a far different impression was made upon her by my gentle Elise.

Unobserved, I was gazing upon the two when they met. Elise, surrounded by her friends, was speaking of the charm of a country life, and a little way off stood Maud watching her, her proud lip slightly curled, as in contempt of Elise's girlish enthusiasm; but all at once, as a remembrance of sorrow flitted across that fair, expressive face, and the worn and restless expression which comes over her at intervals became visible, a deeper earnestness was manifested in the dark eyes which observed her—a faint smile of exultation, as though Maud rejoiced in the suffering of the wife of Ralph Heath. Again I thought how varied was the beauty of the two who were before me, and in my heart there grew a new bitterness towards Maud. To the falsehood of her youth might I not, in a degree, attribute that very expression on Elise's countenance? for it was she who taught me doubt of all, when I discovered that lips which I believed pure in their truthfulness were desecrated by treachery. Though time had dimmed the recollection of her perjured faith in the hour of trial, it had cast its Upas-like shadow upon me, and confounded truth with falsehood.

Yes, Maud Rutherford, to you I am indebted for the

bitter fruit which I reaped, in after time, from the seed which your falsehood sowed in the trustful heart of youth; and with the remembrance a cloud came out of the past, and fell over you; and I beheld, as you stood before me in your rich evening apparel, with the jewels for which you bartered your girlhood glittering in your hair, only a vain, worthless puppet of society.

We have met William Rutherford. Elise looked paler and sadder. He was unconscious of the occurrence of aught which could embarrass him. When he seeks us he is no longer repulsed by my coldness. From the task which had engrossed his entire attention he was aroused to a consciousness of Elise's state for the first time on the day of which I have written you.

It was of her childhood that Elise had spoken. Once again she had fancied herself a child in her father's house, with the forbidden companion of her youth. Aware of her mother's fate, the truth had flashed over young Rutherford. He would have disclosed his knowledge to me at once, but, from my avoidance of him, supposed me to be aware of the truth, and averse to speaking of it with him, a comparative stranger.

How long we shall remain here I cannot decide. I am weary of this life, and long to return to our home; but it will be in all things as Elise wills. I cannot consult her wishes now too assiduously. I have a great deal to do to retrieve the past.

It will not be long before you again hear from me. Pray Heaven that Elise may be even better than she now is, — that a paleness so deathly may not chase at intervals the color from her cheek.

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

Heath Hall, May.

We are at home again; but, ah! Eda, there is a voice which whispers to me, and will not be silenced, that there will be ere long another journey,—that Elise will be the traveller, and that I must remain behind! But she will not go alone. Angels will lead the way; the spirit, perchance, of our lost boy, will be sent to lead his mother homeward. O, Eda, how can I write you this?—how trace words more terrible to me than my own death-warrant could be?

The first violets were blooming on our little one's grave when we returned. It was Elise's desire to go, but she has now scarce strength to walk in the soft, warm spring morning to the little mound of earth, not far off, in the shadow of a young tree. She never goes there now, though the flowers have sprung in beauty thereon, and the violets have faded in the shade; though a soft, velvet-like carpet is spread by nature, all the way, for her footsteps. But these fall heavily, Eda, and waver; she must rest on my strong arm now, and pillow her head on my broad chest.

All night she lies awake, to fall into a troubled sleep at dawn. But no longer is she sad, or filled with a secret grief. She talks with me ever of the beautiful hours when last in May-time we walked in the garden and woodland together. But never in words does she allude to the night which is coming fast to me with the sunset of her life, though there are times when she looks at me with a longing, pitying tenderness, as though she would fain strengthen me for the coming struggle. But not yet is she strong enough; it will come by and by, that strength which is always given the dying. I foresee it all; she will speak with me in her own gentle way, and compel me to submission. I shall no longer be suffered to rebel thus wildly against this bitterest decree.

Only yesterday the words trembled on her lip and died away in a sigh, when I murmured so passionately to Dr.

Francis, "I will take her away, far away — she shall not stay here to grow ever paler !" and he looked on me in pity — on Elise in tenderness and fear. But she cannot go ; she must stay here and die ! O, Eda ! God cannot, shall not thus desolate me ! She must stay — stay to purify me.

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

June.

Summer has dawned, with its burden of roses, its wealth of beauty, and all day long the birds sing in the woods close at hand. Nature has revived all her flowers but Elise ; she droops evermore, Eda ; fainter and fainter blooms the rose on her cheek. She now speaks of her pilgrimage on earth as well-nigh over. She is strong to counsel me now. The time of which I wrote you has come ; the love of her Creator rises supreme over that of earth. All along she has desired that she might live until summer came. And it is here ; she is ready — she is waiting.

In the solemn silence of the night she watches the coming of the angel of death. Again and again she fancies she has heard a strain of music winding through the woodland and floating down the distant hills. The last time it was close at hand, and when it ceased she felt a touch as though a form brushed past her ; and she awoke me from the slumber into which I had fallen. There was no human being present, but Elise lay smiling on her pillow, her eyes turned towards the moonlit casement. "Do you see him, Ralph ?" she whispered, softly. "He is standing in the moonlight, my beautiful boy ! But he looks not as of old ; he smiles tenderly on his mother's fear — he is calling me home. Fear not, Ralph, to trust to the angel's care."

I answered not. I saw, with my material eyes, but the moonbeams, I heard but the breeze sighing in the first dawn of early day ; but Elise believes that the vision will draw

ever nearer, until God's messenger from the spirit-land leads her silently away.

A little while ago, and when the dog howled at night on the door-stone she shuddered and grew faint with a nameless fear. But now she knows no fear ; there is only a smile on her lip, which softens day by day. I dare not leave her ; I cannot sleep, lest I awake to find her forever departed.

O, Eda ! I dread lest when the hour comes a mortal weakness oppress her, that the way to her will seem less bright, darker than it does now. My soul grows faint with grief, and I would be strong to support, to cheer. No tears must fall ; only smiles, and parting words of love.

RALPH.

TO EDA HERBERT.

Heath Hall, June.

Gone, Eda ! Alone, O Father ! The eyelids are closed in their last, their eternal repose, upon the cheek which glows not with the faintest pulse of life. Not a nerve thrills, not a shade steals over the pale form, though the lips of passion have again and again pressed thereon with words of burning love.

The wind breathing amid the trees swept in music up the hill-side, and all alone, in the solemn silence of the night, I gazed upon her, bathed in the glory of the moonlight, and marked the same smile that illumined her face in our bridal hour. And then, Eda, I felt as though a spirit floated past me out into the viewless air.

"Good-by, dear Ralph !" she whispered faintly, and the white lips no longer moved ; but still I heard her tones floating about me, until they grew fainter and fainter in the distance.

"Elise !" I murmur ; and Elise is the long, lingering cry which trembles, on the hush of midnight, to the ear of the

Creator, in whose presence blooms the flower over whose beauty breathed the frost of jealousy.

I, Eda, dared to deem myself more than air, sunshine, all that was requisite for Elise's well-being ; but when life's first tangible sorrow fell upon her, I stood far off, cold, austere, in the arrogance of my fancied superiority over her, the frail child. God of Heaven ! forgive the atheism of the thought which dared to doubt the angel which thou sent on earth to minister to me, the egotistical one, with the curse of blind ingratitude now weighing heavily upon him !

Eda, there was a long, stormy night, and yet in the heavens there was no cloud. The moon smiled mockingly, all night long, through the folded curtains of the drawing-room. upon the marble statue of death, which they had draped in white, and placed upon a couch therein, and strewn with wild roses.

Eda, I was no longer human. I, lost soul, grew brute in my despair, cursing destiny, and desecrating the presence of the dead by my rebellion. But those murmured curses rolled back upon the spirit which had conceived them ; for a chance moonbeam played over the cold, white lips with a holy smile frozen thereon. Then my defiant soul grew still ; no sound broke the silence, until with the morning's dawn I wept — ay, wept and prayed, while with the deepening light there grew upon those pallid lips a beauty beyond that of earth ; and, with a strange hush at my heart, I entered the octagon room, with its warmth and sunshine, folded the rose-hued curtains over the windows, placed yet another soft cushion upon the couch where in life the dear head had rested ; and then, Eda, I went back to the gloomy drawing-room, and lifted her tenderly in my arms, for I could not bear to see her there. Tony was in the hall ; he looked shocked, and gazed in terror at the burden which I bore ; but I passed on, and laid her to rest upon the soft couch. From the conservatory I brought a handful of those crimson roses

which in life she had loved so well; and I laid them upon her bosom, and in her golden hair.

All day, seated by that low couch, I gazed upon her with a silent, passionless sadness; for she no longer had that terrible death look, but, seemingly pale and weary, slept placidly. Then I could fancy her at rest, no longer shivering beneath life's cold blasts; and, with the passing of all self from my thoughts, I became grateful that the bud which had opened from the parent stem had been also gathered.

Eda, I can write to you how I watched day and night by Elise's side; but not of the hour when the beautiful form which had lain in my bosom was resigned to the dark, still tomb, and the semblance of life with which I had cheated myself was over.

The hour I gave her up, the bird, which had poured its song fainter each day, beat its wing for the last time against the golden bars of its prison, and died. Still its cage hangs in the recess of the window, but no note of music steals out with the sunbeams; still a couch stands close at hand, with a woman's crimson mantle thrown thereon, but no white hand plays amid its folds. Days, weeks, have gone by since the occupant of that room joined the tenantry of heaven; and the only sound which breaks upon its silence is the murmur of a sobbing prayer when I am there alone, alone with the memory of the past.

There are white hairs amid my locks, Eda; I am bowed as though with age; deep furrows are graven on my brow.

I am looking forward not to death; for, O! there is a conquest of selfish grief and passion to be achieved before I may do so. To life's field of battle I have been marching onward with the arrogance of a leader of a bannered host, but who now feels his ranks thinned, his glory shorn, though he still bows not to his conqueror's will. Fate has been my opponent. The Almighty is my conqueror. He has smitten me, Eda, in the pride of my self-reliance. He has taught

me to recognize, in spirit as in life, his omnipotence. He will accept no false allegiance, no half submission. The burning desire to drown grief in the delirium of worldly ambition, which sweeps, in my desolation, over me, must be allayed. I must be purified to meet Elise ; and, above all else, I have in the end a sterner lesson than all others to learn. From my heart I must put away the earthly desire for *her* sake to be admitted to the home of the blest. Child-like reverence and adoration of Him, with passive submission to his will, must take her place in my thoughts.

I am very weak. Without His aid I cannot do this. I shall falter and faint over my task. Then, O Eda ! pray for me in thy far-off home, — for him whose heart is withered, whose life is cold, whose flowers of affection are blighted.

For the brother of thy youth, darling Eda ! growing fast into the lone and desolate old man, send forth thy spirit, so high and pure, in earnest petition to our Father's ear. He hearkens even to me, the erring, the late idolatrous. He surely will to thee, the pure and meek in heart !

RALPH.

ONE I MET.

THOSE flashing eyes of angry light,
Alas ! they read not mine aright.
O, erring sister, young and fair,
But tender pity met thee there !

I thought, as through the tented screen
The golden sunlight's drifting sheen
Fell o'er her like a holy thrall,
Of the great love enfolding all.

She only knew of mocking scorn
That on her brow pressed down the thorn ;
She only felt her presence made
In the clear light a darkening shade.

But I retraced the buried hours,
To bind that brow with summer flowers ;
And, looking back through years of sin,
Saw her a guileless child again.

I thought of tender hands once lain
Upon that brow to soothe its pain ;
Close nestled to a mother's breast,
When life was love, and love was blessed.

I saw from her those pure hands fall,
Chilled by the touch that reacheth all ;

The rest is hidden from my thought,
I only know what has been wrought.

I only know man's passion lays
Darkly on life's unguarded ways ;
And when the simoon sweeps the sod,
Earth offers not her flowers to God.

THE SIGNET-RING;

OR, FRANCOISE DE FOIX.

A TALE OF THE COURT OF FRANCIS THE FIRST

“ Her lot is on you — silent tears to weep,
And patient smiles to wear through suffering’s hour ;
And sunless riches, from affection’s deep,
To pour on broken reeds — a wasted shower-!
And to make idols, and to find them clay,
And to bewail that worship — therefore, pray ! ”

MRS. HEMANS.

It was sunset, — a delicious sunset in sunny France. A flood of golden light was falling over the fine old chateau of Chambord, the favorite residence of Francis the First, the young and chivalrous monarch of France ; while the evening breeze murmured softly in the far-stretching forest near at hand, whose recesses had echoed, many hours during the day, to gay laughter and musical voices, as the royal court swept onward beneath its shade.

Just as a dusty carriage rolled to the entrance of the chateau, one of a group of gayly-dressed cavaliers, who stood conversing together, took a step forward as the heavy vehicle went slowly by, raising his plumed cap reverently towards a casement, where, half-hidden by the silken curtain, stood the king, with his dark, falcon-like eyes flashing joyously, and a faint, mocking smile upon his lip, as he waved his hand slightly to the salutation of M. de Guise.

“ Now, on my honor, gentlemen, we would but perform a duty worthy of a gallant knight, were we to challenge M. de

Chautebriand for his cold reception of this paragon of loveliness, who has brought her bright eyes hither to light our sovereign's court!" and the Admiral de Bonnavet, as he spoke, directed his companion's attention to a gentleman, who, with cheeks deadly pale, and brow dark as midnight, advanced to the assistance of a lady who sprang eagerly from a carriage.

"Calm yourself, madam; the eyes of the dissolute court of Francis are upon you," said this man; and the Count de Chautebriand, as he spoke, drew the hand of his young wife within his arm, hurrying her past the inquisitive glances turned towards her.

But more than one gay nobleman caught a glimpse of a sweet young face, with large, lustrous eyes of blue, cheeks glowing with joy and emotion, and a form of rare grace and beauty, slight and girlish as it was.

Ere the hour passed, more than one of the court beauties, as they robed themselves for the saloons of royalty, learned that the loveliest woman in France, the beautiful Francoise de Foix, still in her early girlhood, had arrived.

"Is it thus, thus, Jean, that you welcome me?" asked the young wife, with tearful eyes, as her husband led her to her apartments.

"Could you anticipate other than a cold greeting, madam, from one whom you have thus boldly disobeyed? Recollect yourself, and cease to upbraid one whom you have rendered more miserable than he ever dreamed of becoming."

"I disobedient! I make you miserable! I, your fond, devoted wife, Jean! Ah! but you are jesting, dear Jean! you seek but to try me. Say, is it not so?" And, as she spoke, she would have wound her arms about him.

But he drew back with cold hauteur and freezing disdain, and with the same bitter smile addressed her. "Would you add mockery, madam, to disobedience?" Then, suddenly

changing his tones to those of passionate grief and tenderness, he continued,

“O, Francoise, God pardon you for the bright illusion you have dispelled! Until now man never trusted human creature so wholly as I have trusted you, child that you are! When I left you in Brittany, blessing God that he had given me a love so pure, how blind was I then!—then I believed you true and brave; now I find you weak and cold.”

“Weak and cold, Jean!” and the wife raised herself almost haughtily erect as she spoke, dashing aside her gathering tears. “Was it weakness to love you only as woman might love a husband, knowing him to be worthy of that love—love you so devotedly that even in parting I could smile amid bitter tears, knowing it to be your will? Call you that implicit obedience coldness?—weakness in me, I ask, to hasten to your side when you were so thoughtful as to desire my presence? Would it have been more in compliance with your wishes, had I lingered by my child’s side in preference to hastening to you? O! Jean, Jean! how cruelly you misjudge me!”

“Recollect, madam, that I expressly forbade your presence at this court,—that I besought you to disregard even my own command to leave Brittany, unless enforced by the signet-ring, the fellow of that with which I encircled your finger when we parted.”

“And how else have I conducted? Weary and sick at heart as I was from your prolonged absence, longing to be once more by your side, staid I not patiently at home until the fellow of this ring, which encircles my finger, never in life to leave it, Jean, came to me?” And, as she spoke, she withdrew her glove, holding up one slender finger, with a ring of curiously-wrought gold thereon.

But he shrunk back as though death was in its touch. “Add not falsehood, Francoise, to your other faults!” he said. “They may be pardoned; not that! not that!”

“Hush, Jean, hush!” and once more she sprang to his side, and laid her hand upon his lips, as if she would fain silence the voice which she might not listen to accusing her of treachery, and love it when it had ceased. “Not falsehood, Jean, you shall not believe it of me!”

But he turned aside, and, opening a casket, took from thence a signet-ring, and, with his dark eyes bent full upon her, held it up to view.

“Jean, Jean! believe it not!” gasped the horror-stricken girl.

But he drew himself sternly up as he spoke. “You will cease, madam, to annoy me with your protestations of innocence. Henceforth you have a part to play; not that of the beloved and honored wife of an idolizing husband, but that of the countess of a French nobleman, belonging to an ancient and an honorable family. Be faithful, madam, I warn you, to your honor and mine. My eye will be upon you, no longer to guide and support, but to mark your conduct. Tears are henceforth unavailing; you have chosen your fate. You will now robe yourself with all haste; for the sooner you are presented, the better. The entire court is now doubtless ringing with the news of your arrival. Your dressing-room and chamber is beyond this. The shrine, I doubt not, will prove worthy of its mistress.” And, turning on his heel, he left the apartment, not deigning to bestow another glance upon the graceful form sinking to the floor, faint with agony and despair.

But when the door closed, he leaned heavily against the wall for support, dashing aside a bursting tear; the next moment raised himself erect, and, with slow and stately step, passed onward, the slight pallor of his cheek alone betraying the conflict within his breast.

The first great grief of life is harder to bear than all others. We grow strong in suffering; the heavily-tried heart either hardens or breaks. Only in sudden, unlooked for happiness

will the ice which has gathered about the heart in life's long hours of anguish give way to the wild beatings of unanticipated joy.

Thus it was with Francoise de Foix, whose bright path in life became suddenly darkened by gathering clouds — clouds so dense that even the bright star of hope failed to penetrate their gloom. She neither moaned nor wept; words and tears came not at her bidding. Faint and silent she knelt where her husband had left her, with her head drooping low on her bosom, while the shadows of the coming night filled the lofty chamber with gloom. Cold words had made the young heart gloomier than the most palpable shadows of evening.

All at once there came a burst of music stealing along the corridors, reaching even the ear of the sad occupant of that silent chamber.

With the first note she lifted her clasped hands to her ears, as if she would fain shut out those sounds of revelry and joy; but even through the slender fingers poured a richer strain, and with it the recollection of her husband's words; and she arose, with eager haste, to do his bidding.

As she opened the door of the dressing-room, which he had pointed out before he left her, she drew back, shading her eyes from the dazzling light which streamed from the wax tapers burning in the silver sconces on either side of the tall mirror in its carved frame. It was a scene of exquisite taste, and more than regal luxury; but Francoise de Foix noted not the glowing carpet, the luxurious couches, or the gorgeously-draped walls.

A girl knelt upon the carpet before the dressing-table, her fingers busied with a pile of glittering jewels, gleaming amid folds of glistening satin. She arose as Madame de Chautebriand came forward, courtesying reverently, with an expression of profound admiration, as she looked upon the face before her, so lovely and so sad.

"Perhaps madam is unaware," said the girl, as the lady's

glance rested questioningly upon her, "that the king has graciously appointed me to the honor of attending upon her." And Francoise seated herself before the mirror with a look of mournful submission, feeling that there was no alternative for her but obedience.

Just then the door opened, and her own attendant, a young girl whom she had brought with her from Brittany, entered. "Ah, dear lady, not yet robed, and M. de Chautebriand awaiting you? He will be here very, very soon."

As she spoke, Francoise de Foix's cheek grew warm, and her lips quivered as she murmured, "He is coming for me then, dear, dear Jean! Pray hasten; he must not wait for me."

But even their swift fingers were too slow; she herself gathered up the whole mass of golden curls, and wound them carelessly yet gracefully together, thrusting a heavy comb of gold, crusted over with glittering jewels, amid them. Then, with trembling fingers, she folded the snowy satin robe, with its costly drapery of delicate lace, about her graceful form, while the youngest maid clasped a necklace of heavy pearls about the white throat of her agitated mistress.

"Hark! it is his step;" and, as she spoke, she advanced to meet her husband. With the light falling full upon her, her cheek glowing with excitement, her full blue eyes glistening with emotion, she stood radiant in beauty before him. But no smile lighted up the haughty lineaments of Jean de Chautebriand.

For an instant she met his look with a fond, asking gaze; then, drawing her arm within his own, he led her silently and coldly forth.

"O, Jean, Jean! smile, smile once upon me, or I cannot bear this!" murmured the embarrassed woman, clinging to her husband's side as he led her up the saloon, while a murmur of admiration, unchecked even by the royal presence, ran round, as all eyes were bent upon them. But even as she

besought him the group clustered around the spot where the monarch stood gave way, and "Madame de Chautebriand, sire," fell upon her ear, in the clear, deep tones of her husband's voice, as he withdrew her arm, drawing a step back from her side. The beautiful cheek crimsoned as the young countess raised her drooping eyes, and sank gracefully upon her knee before the monarch.

"Rise, fair Countess of Chautebriand," he said, in a sweet and musical voice; and he bent forward, raising her instantly, while Francoise felt the jewelled hand of the king grow warm about her own, as he continued, "We had thought to chide one who lingered so long away, giving her presence at last so reluctantly to our court; but our lips are mute,—we have no voice to chide one so lovely. Therefore permit me, sweet lady, to welcome you to Chambord, and entreat of you in its gayeties to cease to pine for Brittany. M. de Chautebriand, my thanks are due you for your kindness in bringing so fair a flower hither. Accept the gratitude of your sovereign." And Francis bowed, as he spoke, to the stately nobleman before him; but, for all that, more than one who looked noted a faint, mocking smile on his lip, and the haughty salutation of M. de Chautebriand.

Francoise de Foix only knew that the sweetest voice that ever thrilled the heart of woman was ringing, with all its music, within her ear; that a monarch's eyes, full and large, and filled with a world of passionate admiration, were bent upon her burning cheeks, as, still clinging to the side of her haughty husband, she withdrew from the royal circle; and wherever she moved, throughout the evening, that glance followed her, as she listened, for the first time, with flushing cheeks and drooping eyes, to the whispered compliments of the gay courtiers as they crowded around her.

The evening was wearing away, when the Count de Chautebriand approached the circle of the queen, by whose side he had left his young wife; and for the first time that night his

cheek lost its strange pallor, his brow its gloom, when his glance rested upon her.

The unwonted glow had left the delicate cheek ; no longer the heavily-fringed lids drooped. The large eyes had lost their feverish light, and were soft and dewy with emotion. No longer the delicate lace shading the white bosom was stirred by the tumultuous beatings of an agitated heart, as she stood by the side of her royal mistress, the light and snowy folds of her dress contrasting with the crimson drapery and gorgeous robes of the queen.

With a sunny smile upon her lip she spoke, while every accent was full of the unutterable affection of the young mother's heart.

With her soft voice and encouraging smile the queen had won the child-like creature by her side to speak with an innocent freedom and artlessness rarely known in those luxurious saloons. She was speaking of her child. What wonder, then, that, as the thoughts of the child-mother wandered from that scene of regal pomp and luxury to the quiet chamber of her infant, she ceased to listen to the swelling music, to look upon the fluttering crowd ?

With that memory, over her whole countenance there came an expression of such exquisite tenderness and beauty, a smile so faint and indescribably sweet, that the face of Francoise de Foix became almost radiant.

The pale, dove-eyed queen sighed involuntarily, and glanced uneasily towards the king.

Another had marked that smile ; a graceful woman, still in early womanhood, with the same large, deep-set eyes and aristocratic features with the monarch.

"Does your majesty note that smile ?" asked the low voice of Marguerite of Valois.

"Ah ! ma mignon," answered the king, "not but to covet it in its beauty."

"Is it wise, will it not be cruel, to initiate her into the

miseries of a court life? Can you not spare this one, Francis?"

Something of sadness mingled in the voice of his beautiful and idolized sister, and he looked inquiringly to the agitated woman before him, usually so ready to sacrifice the happiness of every human heart to his caprice.

"Marguerite, what moves you thus?" and the king forgot even Francoise, in the agitation of the young duchess.

"Nothing, Francis, nothing! Look," she said, only too glad of a pretext for withdrawing his attention from herself, directing his glance to the once more haughty bearing and frowning brow of the Count de Chautebriand, and the paling cheek of Francoise de Foix, as, bending low, the Admiral de Bonnavet saluted her.

"Ah, on my honor, he is chary of his sweet captive," murmured the monarch, noting the evident chagrin of the husband as that nobleman, with a glance that only too evidently expressed his admiration, looked upon the timid young creature before him. The next moment, and Francis himself joined them.

"The night is wearing," he said; "already the roses pale upon thy cheeks, fair lady. Therefore, although grieving to lose your presence, we give you permission to retire; for you must be weary from long travel and fatigue, we would fain deem encountered for our sake, even though we know it to have been reluctantly. Is it not so?" asked the monarch, with a faint smile.

"Nay, sire," commenced Francoise, looking up; but, as she met the dark eyes bent upon her, she blushed and hesitated.

"You do Madame de Chautebriand injustice, sire," answered the husband, with a bitter smile. "I myself can bear witness for her that she came not reluctantly or unwillingly."

"Ah! was it indeed thus? Then our gratitude is boundless." And the monarch's most winning smile beamed upon

her, as he lifted the white fingers of the countess to his lips, and turned away. They had been standing in the deep recess of a tall window, and no eyes noted the monarch's courtesy but those beside him. Francis himself beheld not the fiery glance which the haughty nobleman turned upon him.

"Unwind these jewels, Adele ; they press heavily upon my brow, and it is aching, aching fearfully with all this light and fatigue !" and, as she spoke, Francoise de Foix sank wearily upon a low seat before the dressing-table. A terrible weight was pressing upon her heart, crushing all the bright hopes and love-dreams of her young life ; but the girl, as she unwound that shining hair, marked her shiver, and press her hand to her brow, as if she would fain recall what had passed.

"Give me my mantle, Adele, and then leave me. I am very weary, too weary to sleep ; I would rest here a while." And, throwing a velvet mantle over the long, floating night-robe of the lady, they left her.

Still at intervals a note of music found its way into that luxurious dressing-room ; but it moved not her who sat with her head bowed upon the low dressing-table before her, her white fingers straying amid the golden curls loosened from their confinement. After a long time, a distant footstep echoed through the corridor, and she sprang up with flushing cheeks ; but the step passed on. Then her lip quivered, and she threw herself once more back into the chair ; while a shower of tears fell through the clasped fingers, and rained upon the jewels strewn upon the dressing-table.

For a while she wept ; then she dried her tears, and, raising her head, looked on the pale face and tear-stained features which the mirror threw back. But, as she gazed, there came a faint color ; scarcely perceptible it was at first, but it deepened gradually to a crimson glow ; the blue eyes flashed, the coral lips wreathed themselves into a haughty smile, while the mantle fell far back with the heaving of the white bosom,

and she paused not now to listen with smiling lip for his footsteps, but to gaze on the image mirrored in beauty before her. The serpent uncoiled itself in its glittering beauty, winding its coils fast about the heart chilled and thrown back upon itself. The jewelled hands clasped convulsively the snowy folds of her robe, her eyes beamed with defiant pride, as she murmured, "Scorned by thee !" Was it an angel voice that whispered, "father of thy child !" and hushed the defiant word upon her lip, causing her to shudder and turn away ? Was it a holy memory that fell like dew upon the burning heart, quenching the fiery glow upon the cheek, dimming the mother's eyes with tears ?

"Anne," came slowly and remorsefully from her quivering lip ; and, throwing aside the rich mantle, her white robe floating about her, she passed onward to the chamber beyond. It was flooded with the silver light of the moon ; — and when the closing door hid the light and the perfume of the dressing-room, the young countess knelt meekly beside the lofty couch with its snowy draperies, and, burying her face in her hands, prayed humbly for strength and pardon.

Through the closely-shrouded casements there stole a golden beam, shedding a faint, tremulous light throughout the sleeping chamber of Françoise de Foix. It had none of the gorgeous magnificence of the dressing-chamber : but the snowy silk of the curtains floating about the tall bed and lofty casements, with their sweeping silver fringes ; the soft carpet of a delicate cream-color, with bunches of white lilies and crimson roses ; the cushions of velvet, white as new-fallen snow, with bouquets of bright blossoms wrought with rare skill thereon, all were in exquisite accordance with the beauty of the lovely dreamer, who lay with her head pillowed upon one slender arm, the long golden hair escaping from the delicate lace of her night-coif, and half veiling her face.

That she had passed a restless night was apparent from the silken counterpane falling in white, billowy folds about her,

while one hand, all the fairer from the contrast of the heavy ring thereon, grasped, with a convulsive effort, the costly lace which fringed the pillow.

“Jean, Jean!” she murmured, softly, then passionately, while two or three heavy tears stole through the drooping lashes, and she clasped the drapery yet tighter within her hand. But even as she wept, a smile stole over the lovely features; then a blush, which dried the falling tears, so deep and warm its hue; and she turned restlessly upon her pillow, murmuring, half-aloud, “The king!”

Was the monarch’s glance haunting her even then? — the music of a monarch’s voice lingering yet upon her ear, that she murmured “Sire,” yet once again?

Just then the door of the dressing-room opened, and the young court attendant, provided by the king, entered, and, with a smile on her lip, placed a bouquet of rare flowers in a marble vase by the sleeper’s couch. Then, gathering back the curtains, she bent down and caught the name just audible on her lip; and now her smile had yet a deeper meaning, as she departed noiselessly as she had entered.

Scarcely had the door closed behind her, when, stealing through the shrouded casement, there arose from below a burst of music, swelling rich and full on the morning air.

With the first note, the sleeper raised herself from her pillow, and, brushing back the curtains, looked dreamily around; but, as the music died, there arose the murmur of gay voices, then a loud, joyous laugh; and Françoise smiled an answering smile, and, folding her dressing-robe about her, crossed to the window, and withdrew a fold of the curtain.

The whole court-yard beneath her casement was alive with courtiers and gayly-dressed grooms. But the countess’ glance rested only upon the terrace directly before her, upon which stood the king, with a group of gentlemen surrounding him.

The symmetry of his tall figure was displayed by the dark hunting-dress which he wore; the long white plume in his

cap floated back from the broad, high brow, beneath which gleamed eyes now soft and lustrous as woman's, and now flashing imperiously on all around him. Just back of him stood the Count de Chautebriand, his pale cheek and sombre countenance contrasting only too plainly with the courtly bearing of his joyous sovereign; and Francoise murmured, sorrowfully, "Jean!"

Just then the king turned toward the silent nobleman, and addressed him, with a courteous manner and pleasant smile. Involuntarily they both raised their glance to the casement above, and there stood the young countess herself regarding them.

Instantly the plumed cap of Francis swept the ground, and a warm, glowing smile illuminated his features. With a hurried, tremulous acknowledgment of the salutation, the lady dropped the curtain between them, but not until she had perceived the king's smile, and the cold, bitter glance of her husband. With a deep sigh, she turned away; but her cheek no longer flushed, nor her eye dimmed; she was learning to feel and subdue her anguish, — for a sensitive heart like hers a bitter and a dangerous lesson.

"Your cheek is even paler than it was last night, sweet lady. I fear me our court air will rob you of your bloom," said her attendant, as she arranged the last fold of her mistress' riding-habit, and looked upon the beautiful face gleaming out from beneath the sable plume of the velvet cap of the same dark hue. "Are you ill, sweet lady?"

There was a gentle concern irresistibly winning in the girl's manner, and already the lady began to take a deep interest and pleasure in her new attendant. She did not attempt to hide the tears that were gathering in her eyes. Vain, futile, had the effort been; for they had followed each other in rapid succession, until, at last, unable to conquer her grief, the unhappy one bowed her face in her hands, weeping bitterly.

Through the casement there came the murmur of gay voices, the pealing music and the neighing of horses, as the royal train gathered in the court for the morning chase, and over all rested the glad, warm sunlight; and there, with joy and light surrounding her, stood the young wife in her almost passionate grief.

For many moments Ninette gazed, sorrowfully, upon her; then she entered the chamber beyond, and in a moment reappeared with the flowers which she had placed there.

"I do not think, lady, that you have yet beheld them," she said, softly, placing them in her hand.

They were rare and fragrant flowers, and as their breath floated upwards Ninette whispered, "He sent them to you, lady, by me." And Francoise brushed away her falling tears, pressing them eagerly to her lips. With a brightening glance she held them there, inhaling their perfume; but the tumult beneath her windows increased as the train formed about the monarch, and, hastily snatching one white, dewy bud from the rest, she thrust it into the belt of her dress, and left her apartment.

Far and wide the forest of Bouglue echoed to the excitement of the chase. As one by one each gay rider rode onward, a solitary loiterer lingered on the way, reining in her spirited horse beneath the shadow of a forest tree. Weary and wretched, Francoise de Foix paused to wipe away a starting tear, the white blossom drooping in her belt.

"We should blush for the chivalry of our court, were we not only too grateful for that neglect by which we ourself may profit," fell upon her ear, in the sweet, low tones of Francis the First; and, with a warm blush, Francoise de Foix raised her eyes to the king.

"What! weeping, fair lady?—weeping at Chambord? Are you already pining for Brittany? Methinks my Lord de Chautebriand forgets himself when he leaves one so beautiful thus sorrowing and alone. We will ride up and chide

him," he said, gayly, but with his glance bent steadily upon her.

"Nay, sire; with your permission, I will not intrude," she answered, proudly. "I pray your pardon, sire, but I would fain rest here a while in the shade."

"Ah! you have ridden far, dear lady, to-day, and boldly as the best of us. I, too, am weary of the sunlight and the chase. On my knighthood, fair Countess of Chautebriand," and the monarch bent low in his saddle as his glance rested upon the drooping flowers in her belt,—"on my knighthood, fair countess," and he bent down until the plume within his cap mingled with the mane of her horse, as with his lips he touched the little hand which held the bridle, "any prince in Christendom may envy Francis of France. I had scarce dared to hope, fair lady, that you would thus grace this frail token of my regard;" and he pointed to the flower which she wore.

"Thine, sire,—thine?" and, with trembling fingers, she drew it forth. "I beseech your pardon, my liege; I thought—I fancied that——"

"Another sent it, you would say, madam," said the king, and Francoise bowed her head in assent. There was a slight tinge of bitterness mingling with the mocking tones of the king's voice, as he continued, "You deemed it a love-token from the recreant Count of Chautebriand, and, forgetting his unkindness, you have cherished this poor flower, but that its leaves may strew the ground when you learn that the hand of Francis gathered it for love of your bright eyes." And he pointed to the white leaves fallen upon the green turf.

When he first spoke, the lady had raised herself haughtily erect, gathering up the bridle, as though, all monarch as he was, she would fain leave his side who blended the term recreant with Chautebriand's name; but when he spoke of coldness, her hand dropped the bridle, the fair head sank upon

the heaving bosom, and, as he ceased, a tear fell glittering upon his hand, as it rested upon her bridle.

Memory was busy with unkindness. Low, scornful words still lingered on her ear. What wonder, when the warm heart grew cold, — when the young spirit yearned, in its desolation, for human sympathy and love, — that it thrilled to the music of a low voice, whispering, “Grieve not, my dear lady, grieve not;” that, for one wild, delirious moment, the sunshine of that smile veiled the cold, dark shadows gathering about her; that the beautiful, the worshipped, but fearfully lonely one turned, with an answering smile, to the graceful man by her side! And eloquent was the glance of love and admiration which met her own.

The sunlight wavered on the green turf, as it stole through the leafy canopy above; the distant music mingled with the gay song of the birds; but over all there fell a dim cloud. Darkness was closing around her; the slight figure wavered in the saddle, and Francoise de Foix would have fallen upon the outstretched arm of the king; but suddenly, soft and clear, above the music, floated the plaintive cry of a wild bird, and she raised herself erect with new-born strength, shook the bridle free from the hand which held it, and bounded recklessly and wildly away.

What roused the woman’s spirit, piercing even the deafness of the fainting ear? It was the same low carol which had floated through the chamber sacred to maternal love when the young mother soothed her child to sleep with her sweet mockery of the woodland bird.

For more than a moment the king’s glance rested upon the slight form speeding so wildly forward. Then a smile, very faint, but full of exultation, wreathed his lip, and he sprang lightly to the ground, gathering up the rose-leaves, thrusting them within his vest, murmuring, half-aloud, “Beautiful Francoise!”

Scarcely had the words left his lips when the loud blast of

a bugle rang through the forest, and the chase swept by. Many a plumed cap was doffed low as the king stood forth; but the stateliest of them all bent his flashing eye sternly on the monarch, and, haughtily erect, rode onward, deigning no courtly salutation to him who lingered in the green wood, coining words as soft and as false as ever won the love of woman or broke the heart of man.

From each embayed window, from every balcony overlooking the spacious court of the Chateau of Chambord, rang forth gay peals of laughter, as the royal court looked down. one sunny morning, upon an imprisoned boar, maddened by spear and arrow, and rushing wildly to and fro in the closed and guarded court beneath.

“On my honor, *ma mignon*, his rage is superb,” said the king to the beautiful Duchess of —, within the embrasure of the window in which he stood, that, unimpeded, he might behold the gigantic efforts which the foaming animal was making to overleap the high barrier around.

As the dark eyes of Marguerite de Valois flashed, and her cheek crimsoned with excitement, the glowing beauty of his sister riveted the attention of Francis; and he ran his eye over that crowded saloon, asking himself if, among the many gathered there, there was one so lovely.

His glance fell upon a girlish figure, somewhat apart from the rest, with her hands clasped wearily before her as she sat, taking no part in the gayety and excitement of the others; her blue eyes resting upon one who stood far off amid a group of gentlemen, with folded arms and gloomy brow. No eyes but those of Francoise de Foix were so lustrous with feeling; no glance in all that glittering train sought another's so full of timid love. The youngest bride there smiled not as softly upon her lord.

There was a prolonged burst of merriment as the boar

made yet another futile effort for freedom ; but the king's glance was riveted. Just then there was a heavy crash, as though the oaken panels of the outer door were shattered, and every one rose up with paling cheek. A moment's silence succeeded, followed by one universal cry of terror, as a rushing step was heard coming up the broad stairway. A fearful bound along the corridor, and statue-like and rigid grew each breathing form ; a hot, fierce breath stirred the silken drapery veiling the entrance, and a solitary being, a woman, young and ineffably beautiful, stood up, gazing wildly upon the fluttering drapery before her. Like the calm of a coming tempest sank the hush of silence along that lofty hall. As the curtain floated back, the wild boar paused upon the threshold, his burning eyes glaring upon the slight figure which barred his progress. His bloody tusks were spotted with foam, his limbs convulsed by madness. One moment, and he raised himself for his fatal leap, while the blue eyes wandered to a rigid form in the distance. But ere they closed, a thrilling cry of joy swept upward to the vaulted ceiling, as the animal rolled in its death struggle close to the very feet of Francoise de Foix, the trusty sword of the king yet quivering in its heart.

“ Give way, gentlemen, give way ! Do you not see that she has but fainted ? ” And the king, as he spoke, waved back the crowd gathering about her, as upon his own arm he bore her to a couch within the recess of an open window. Had the monarch won a life but to desecrate it, that thus he bowed himself down until his heavy plume swept that blanched cheek, while his breath warmed the cold lips with his impassioned words, waking Francoise de Foix from that breathless, dreamless sleep ?

Paralyzed with terror, the wretched Count de Chatebriand had stood, the entire length of the saloon intervening between himself and her whom he deemed his false, yet still beloved wife. He met not the imploring glance turned towards him ;

— the stateliest form in France intervened between them. He only knew a king arose to conquer and subdue.

One might have heard that stern heart beat when the dead boar bounded to his idol's feet. Though he stirred not, his gasping breath told the deadly fear which held him captive. But when the plume of Francis swept that unconscious face ere it rose, he stood beside them, while fierce words and bitter came struggling to his lips for utterance. But his sovereign's glance was upon him. His lord stood before him, and his eye alone spoke the deadly hatred born within his breast.

The long golden curls fluttered in the breeze, and the eyes of Francoise rested upon her husband for a moment in dreamy wonderment; then, as memory came back, the slender fingers which he had taken struggled for freedom, and, with a faint shudder, the blue eyes were turned away, — turned but to beam soft and bright upon the king.

For the first time the Countess de Chautebriand smiled upon him with gratitude and kindness. Ere that smile had faded from her lip, the Count de Chautebriand had departed. His very intensity of feeling had alienated the gentle and loving spirit which had been hitherto devoted to him.

"Gone, Ninette, gone!" gasped forth the horror-stricken, deserted wife, when she learned the departure of her husband for Brittany. "Gone, leaving me here, and alone! No farewell, no mention of return! Abandoned, and by thee, Jean! Leave me, girl; do not presume to look upon my anguish!" Her tones were harsh and stern; so unlike her usual soft, low utterance, that the girl shrank back, half in fear; but even as the wretched woman spoke she sank down upon a seat, her head drooping low upon her bosom.

"Nay, I cannot leave thee thus, dear lady!" and the girl knelt down by her side, pressing her lips to those cold fingers, whispering, "There is one who will comfort thee."

"Comfort, Ninette, comfort! Alas! you little know how desolate, how wretched, I have become! And I was so gay,

so joyous, ere I came hither! I must go home, Ninette. None here care for the unhappy Françoise; every hour I linger in this royal palace adds a fresh drop of bitterness to the cup already full to overflowing. I will petition the king. He is gracious; he will not refuse my prayer."

"Seek him to-night, this very hour, madam; he will not refuse you," urged Ninette, taking up a mantle, and offering it to her as she spoke.

"Yes, I will go myself; he is always gentle, and —" Why did she pause and hesitate? She could not herself have answered wherefore.

Alone in his dressing-room sat the monarch. He had dismissed his attendants, and, with a dreamy smile upon his lip, his head pillowed upon the silken cushions of the luxurious couch upon which he reclined, he lay dreaming of the beautiful Countess de Chautebriand, when the curtain which veiled the entrance was withdrawn, and a favorite page entered, falling reverently upon his knee before him. The brow of Francis darkened as he looked on the intruder; but when the page said, "A lady craves admittance, sire," the king's brow cleared, his eyes flashed, and he answered, "Admit her at once." Once more he sank back upon the couch, but not until he had glanced toward a tall mirror before him, while he ran his jewelled fingers through his long, perfumed locks.

"His majesty will admit you," said the boy, in audible tones. Then the curtain was gathered back, and it fell with a low rustle to the floor, as the door was closed, and a lady, closely muffled, would have knelt before the king; — but he anticipated her by rising, and taking her hand in his.

"Sire, I have a boon to beseech of thee." Her voice was low and tremulous, and Francis smiled, as he gently withdrew the heavy veil, and looked upon the burning cheek and sparkling eyes of Françoise de Foix.

"It is granted, sweet lady, ere it is asked," answered the king, in his softest tones, "save it be to leave us; and we will

not think Françoise de Foix will be thus ungenerous towards her sovereign."

"Pardon me, sire, but on my bended knee," — and she knelt at his feet, in spite of his efforts to prevent her, — "on my knee I would beseech it of thee."

"To leave me, Françoise?" asked the low voice.

But she continued, unheeding him. "I have a child, sire, — an idolized child, the only living thing I may now love without shame or guilt. This day I have been scorned and abandoned. Make the life you have preserved, sire, a desirable one; give me my child, my darling child, or I shall die, for my heart is breaking!"

"My poor Françoise, you do, indeed, look ill. Would the power were mine to grant your prayer; but, sovereign though I am, I have no authority to separate the child from its father."

"Is this true, sire?" and the young mother raised her eyes to his with a glance which should have shamed those false lips into silence. But he answered, looking tenderly down upon the youthful sufferer, "Would, lady, it were not. I cannot bear to see thee grieve thus."

"Can the innocent suffer thus?" murmured the unhappy one. "A wife, and deserted; a mother, and childless! How young — how young, to be thus lone and desolate!"

"No longer desolate or unloved, if you will it, Françoise," said the royal tempter.

Once more she raised her eyes to his, and again they were eloquent with emotion.

"I must leave thee — leave thee, sire!" came slowly from her lips; but she trembled in every limb.

"Leave me for one who looked unmoved upon you in that fearful moment, this morn?" said the wily pleader, shuddering, as if the very recollection of her danger had power to move him thus.

Before her thoughts once more passed that morning hour;

again she looked upon the motionless form of him who should have saved the life which she had consecrated to him ; again she saw the monarch rushing valiantly between herself and death. She turned toward him ; he was kneeling at her feet, with pleading glance and eloquent lip. Her glance met his ; — the whole world faded into nothingness, — she stretched forth her hand toward him. The next moment she shrank back, and gazed wildly upon the outstretched hand, on which glittered a ring, — the signet-ring ! For one moment she looked upon it ; the next, and it lay upon the floor beneath her foot. A wild, exultant smile flitted over the features of him who knelt a monarch before her.

“Dearest !” he whispered, fondly ; and the desecrated hand fell softly upon his own. Was it but her own guilty fancy — or did the night-wind, as it beat heavily against the casement, frame itself into that one word, once so sweet and holy, now so fearful ? “Anne, Anne,” it sighed ; and the false mother, even in that hour of delirious joy, knew how frail a thing it was.

Sigh and murmur on thy way, O whispering night-wind ! thou hast awakened a never-dying remorse, thou hast stung into bitter remembrance an erring heart !

Years, long years, have passed since the Countess of Chautebriand, just blushing into her seventeenth summer, shrank shivering away from the murmur of the night-wind in the royal palace of Chambord. Once more, as in other years, she presses her hands upon her ears, as if she would fain shut out the music pealing at intervals through the corridor. She sits within a chamber more gorgeous, more luxurious, than of old ; for the lavish hand of Francis has woven with jewels the dark bands which hold his prisoner captive. With the mantle of regal wealth he would veil from his captive’s memory the once happy, but now terrible past. Flowers blushed and budded in tall, graceful vases of

Parian marble; the very curtains were looped with garlands of rare exotics, shedding their fragrance around.

No longer folds of snowy silk draped the lofty walls; long waves of crimson and gold now trembled in the perfumed air, and, in the glare of wax tapers, in all that light and splendor, sat Francoise de Foix, in the full bloom of womanhood, in the perfection of her beauty.

But the rich lashes drooped not as of old. The eyes were brighter; for the burning glances of the profligate noblemen who worshipped their sovereign's idol had dried up all the heart's dew once veiling their radiance, even as their impassioned words had seared the soul once pure and gentle.

The girlish form had matured into a more voluptuous beauty, but it retained all the rare symmetry of its proportions.

As her hand fell wearily upon her knee, the soft notes of a flute rose and died away beneath her window; and she sprang impetuously up, the jewels flashing amid her wreathing curls. Gathering back the curtain from the casement, she looked down with frowning brow upon the intruder, as he sang, in a voice of almost unearthly sweetness, one of the impassioned songs of the day.

That voice of music had thrilled many a woman's heart, but its pathos touched not the soul of her who listened. For a moment she gazed upon the tall form and handsome face, over which streamed the light from her casement, as he lifted his velvet cap, casting it to the ground when the curtain was gathered back; and even in that uncertain light she beheld the grateful smile which lighted his countenance; but she frowned upon him, waving him haughtily away.

"Not while the light streams from my lady's casement, and her shadow lingers on the curtain, — not while the night lends me her mantle! Until the day dawns, will I keep my watch, content but to look upon the cage which holds the

prisoned bird," came up in soft, impassioned tones, from below.

For a moment the lady paused, irresolute; then, bending down, she spoke in low and hurried tones. "Would you ruin me, peril my whole future happiness, by this mad passion, Bonnivet? Go, I beseech of you! Already you have annoyed his majesty by your presumption."

"And is it presumption to love the Countess of Chautebriand?" he answered, bitterly.

Again the lady paused, but now it was to press her hand heavily upon her heart, while the voice which answered him was full of anguish.

"Will you not now retire, M. de Bonnivet,—now that your errand is performed, and you have insulted one whom you profess to regard?"

"Pardon me, madam! forgive me, beautiful Francoise! It is Bonnivet's love that makes him unjust; smile only once upon me, and I will leave you."

"You ask that which I have no power to grant. Will you not now retire, unless you would indeed force me to appeal to the king?" and once more she stood haughtily erect.

"The king! Ah, Bonnivet envies him not, beautiful Francoise! You love me, or I were powerless to move you thus!" And he laughed a low, mocking laugh.

Ere it ceased the curtain fell between them, and Francoise de Foix threw herself upon the floor, weeping passionately. For a moment all was silent; then something brushed heavily against the curtain, floating it back, while a bouquet of roses, fresh-culled and glittering with dew, fell at her feet. An instant, and with crimson cheek she stood up, crushing the flowers beneath her foot.

Just then the door opened softly, and Francis himself entered, pausing as his glance fell upon her; but the next

moment and he advanced to her side, and laid his hand on her arm, speaking before she was aware of his presence.

“What grieves thee thus, Françoise?” With a slight start she looked up, and the light faded from her eye, the angry flush from her cheek, and a tear trembled upon those long lashes, as she gazed mournfully on his face. For a moment the monarch’s glance rested almost sternly upon her; but she returned his gaze with fearless confidence, and, bending down, he crushed a tear upon her cheek beneath his lips, murmuring, “What has grieved thee, m’amie?”

“I would beseech a boon of thee, sire,” she answered, sadly.

“Refused I ever one that your sweet voice prayed of me, darling?”

How fond and soft were those tones, — those tones which had won her, in her hour of misery, to worship him who held her still a captive at his side! Darling! — How easy a task it was to know no will but his, when that word, born of love, sounded in her ear!

“Sire, you have not smiled upon me through all this weary day!”

“Look! Am I not smiling upon you now?”

“Ah! and my spirit grows warm in its sunshine. O, I would teach thee ever thus to smile upon me!”

“It were a sweet lesson, Françoise; you will find me a docile pupil. But tell me, what is it you would ask of me? Speak, darling; — I listen.”

“Send away the Admiral de Bonnavet, sire.”

“Ah, madam!” and the king dropped the hand which he held, and drew a step backward, with a gathering frown.

“Nay, you shall not frown upon me! Do you not see how you distress me?” And tears filled her eyes. “You shall first listen to me, as you promised, and I will tell you all; though it be a bitter thing to speak of scorn and insult offered to one’s self. Sire, this night, beneath my very win-

dow, the Admiral de Bonnavet has presumed to bring hither his passion, mocking my affection for yourself. Will you permit this? — will you allow them to add pollution to an already dishonored name, — to bandy that of Francoise de Foix? Shall my love for your majesty be made the jest of Bonnavet and his friends?” And she paused, with burning cheeks and sparkling eyes.

“A dishonored name, Francoise?” asked the king, reproachfully.

“Ah, fearfully so, sire; but, with your love, I can bear it.”

There was unutterable love and devotion in that voice; and, base as he had been, it touched the very soul of her listener. As she ceased, he raised her hand to his lips, reverently as he might have raised a queen's.

The purity of the woman's heart was not all gone. Still there was one green spot left amid the ruins, where flowers might yet spring into being. Still, in the glory of her love, in the adulation of a monarch, she forgot not that she had fallen; and even while she clung to that love for which she had sacrificed honor and duty, memory upbraided her — her remorse slumbered not.

“To-morrow, Francoise,” said the king, “Bonnavet leaves the court.”

The morning came, and the royal train gathered in the saloon for the chase, while the court was filled with the horses and their grooms, and the murmur of gay voices rose aloud. But Francoise de Foix lingered in the embrasure of a window, awaiting the coming of the king, who stood conversing with Marguerite de Valois. The plume of her cap just kissed the delicate cheek, and swept back from the graceful shoulder. The beautiful eyes were full of dreamy thought, and one white ungloved hand toyed listlessly with the velvet buttons of her bodice.

Moment after moment went by, and the king came not; but she was content to stand there in the warm sunlight, with

the murmur of his voice falling on her ear, although the falling curtain hid him from her sight. But suddenly the little hands wreathed themselves convulsively together, and, with cheeks cold and white as marble, lips tightly compressed, lest her gasping breath betrayed her presence, she listened to words which, brief and reckless as they were, struck home to the very soul of that mute listener.

“And it was you, then, who won the fair Countess of Chautebriand from the shades of Brittany? I think I now remember a romantic tale of a ring which possessed the magic power of bringing the lady to Chambord, — that was it, was it not?” questioned the voice of the Admiral de Bonnivet.

“Ah, and little does the proud beauty dream that to myself alone is she indebted for her present state, — as little as I myself dreamed, when I sent her the counterfeit of that signet-ring which could alone procure her presence, that I was bringing one to court to queen it thus above us. They tell me she has scorned your suit, too, Bonnivet,” said M. de Guise.

“Ay, bitterly, and for its profession I must depart from the court; the king has desired my absence. But she shall rue, in bitterest agony, the hour that she spurned me. When we meet again the idol will have fallen, — a brighter star is rising on the court of Francis.”

He had barely ceased speaking when the curtains were swept far back, and, with the same deadly pallor on her cheek, Francoise de Foix stood before them; but not upon the one who was prophesying her fall with words of fierce passion fell those eyes, filled with all the anguish of an outraged spirit, but upon him who had betrayed her.

As she stood there memory had wandered through the long vista of restless, remorse-haunted years, to youth's innocent guilelessness. Low and fearfully calm were the tones in which she addressed the recreant noble, while he gazed

awe-struck upon that woman's form, quivering with a passion fierce and bitter as ever swayed the heart of man.

"And it was you, then, M. de Guise, that aimed that wanton arrow at the heart of Francoise de Foix? Know that the arrow, so recklessly sped, wounded to death a heart purer than your own dastard soul could conceive of! Know that, in the sight of God, and all honorable hearts, you are a guiltier coward than the assassin who has imbrued his hand in kindred blood, — for you have sought to destroy an immortal spirit!"

And, with a step slower, heavier, than it had ever been before, she turned from the side of the startled nobleman, gathering up her robe that it might not touch him as she passed, as though there were pollution in his contact.

Once more within the recess of an embayed window, in the stately palace of Chambord, stood Francoise de Foix, with the golden light falling through the richly-painted glass upon her, the glittering folds of her dress sweeping to the tapestried floor.

Thinner and paler than when we last looked upon it is the fair face; but, with that proud consciousness of her own loveliness which one so beautiful and worshipped as she had been could not fail to possess, she never dreamed of condescending to hide the ravages which grief was making in her beauty, by those arts so well known to the ladies of the French court.

But, though her cheek had lost something of its fulness and its rich bloom, she had, perhaps, never, in her most brilliant hours, looked more fascinating than on that sunny morn, with her pale cheeks, and lustrous eyes, dewy with unshed tears, as they rested on the king, as, with his cap in his hand, its long plume trailing on the floor, he came slowly up that crowded saloon, a faint smile on his lip, his heavily-fringed lids drooping over the dark hazel orbs so laughing in their

beauty, as they rested on the fair forms bending reverently before him.

Nearer and nearer he came towards the spot where she stood, her hands tightly clasped, and trembling in every limb. No longer fearless and happy she waited his coming. The lip which had smiled upon her was forgetting its fondness; the tones of that musical voice had lost something of their sweetness. Another ear was drinking in the music once all her own; but, still hoping even against hope, she was struggling for that which was passing away.

The king's glance fell not upon her, and he was passing onward, when suddenly a shadow lay on the sunlit floor before him, and, looking up, he beheld Francoise de Foix, as she advanced a step from the recess. A sweet asking smile flitted over the beautiful face, as the monarch's glance rested upon her; and, for the first time for many days, he smiled faintly in return, advancing to her side, as she sank back, leaning heavily against the casement. With a quick, hurried motion of his hand, the king loosened the silken curtain, while its folds fell low, screening that pale face from the curious glances bent upon it.

"Look up, m'amie!" he whispered, in low tones, lifting caressingly the mass of golden curls shading the sad face, and looking into those mournful eyes.

"Are you ill, my bright-eyed one, that your graceful limbs quiver thus like an aspen-leaf, your heart beats like a prisoned bird?"

It was weeks, nay, months since he had thus addressed her; and while once more the color came glowing to her cheek, she bowed her head upon the hands clasped within her own, bathing them with her tears.

"Hush, darling, hush! Nay, never weep thus bitterly, or we shall have the attention of the whole court drawn upon us." And, as he spoke, Francis gently raised the drooping

head, adding, "I must leave thee; forget this silly emotion, Françoise."

And he would have turned away; but she laid her hand upon his arm, and, forcing back the tears which would have fain flowed fast and free, looking up imploringly, she prayed,

"Not yet, — go not yet, sire! I will be very calm, — do not fear me. I will choke back these tears, though they stifle me!" And she pressed her hand heavily to her heart, while her voice was low, almost indistinct with emotion.

"Francis, you are forgetting all your old love for me; it is passing away!"

It was rare, very rare, that she addressed him thus. Only in moments like this, when the human heart rouses itself in all its power, are the world and its forms forgotten.

When she called him Francis, he knew that she was deeply moved. Once every pulse had thrilled to hear himself thus addressed; now a frown gathered on his brow, and he half averted his face. But she heeded it not, and, drawing closer to his side, clasping his arm yet tighter with her little hand, as if she would cling to him forever, she continued, "You are forgetting, sire, how terrible was the sacrifice which I made for you. Terrible as was that sacrifice, I fear me Françoise de Foix could again make it for the love of Francis of France."

"He will spare you that trouble, madam. You have taught him a lesson by which he will profit. Henceforth his love shall be given to those whose happiness will be saddened by no painful memories, — whose joy in his affection shall compensate them for all that they have lost, — for her who has no vain regrets to weary him, or make herself miserable."

Françoise de Foix had raised herself with his first words, listening with blanched cheeks. Once or twice she shuddered; once or twice she glanced restlessly to the court below, as if she would have fain dashed herself from that high window,

down upon the sharp pavements beneath, in the frenzy of her despair; but once more, when he ceased, she spoke.

"Sire, do you think that there will be one who can love you more wholly than I have loved? O, believe it not! Have I mourned over the past while you smiled upon me? In your love have not the past and the future been alike forgotten? Have I ever craved the luxuries with which your generosity has surrounded me? Think you, had Francis of France woven a frail flower in my hair, that I had not prized it as highly as the richest jewel that he has twined therein? O, not that you were her sovereign, has Francoise de Foix loved you; not for the royal home you have given her. All, all here were idle pomp and glittering void, without you! Remember, sire, how devotedly, how entirely, I have loved you!"

"With the exception of my predecessor," he spoke, with a reckless levity. Weary of her tears, he sought but to leave her. He little knew how deep the words wounded which he recklessly uttered; he only knew that the low, pleading voice was hushed, that the white fingers unclasped from his arm; and, bending low to her who stood mute in her anguish before him, he passed onward. Not many moments after, a jewelled hand put back the drooping folds from before her, and the Countess de Chautebriand advanced into the saloon, the color all gone from her cheek, the long lashes drooping low over her eyes, the brightness of which had gone out forever. Slow and heavily fell the usually elastic step, and more than one looked after her, as the silken robe trailed slowly past.

She had passed half-way down the saloon, when a low, silvery laugh — a laugh of joy and exultation — rang out upon the perfumed air of that luxurious chamber; and Francoise de Foix turned her glance in the direction from whence it came, and there, bending down to the young, dark-eyed Anne de Heilly, stood the king, with his love-smile on his lip, and his eloquent glance bent upon her.

Well Francoise knew the meaning of that glance. In the

many gathered there whom he had smiled upon, she alone knew it in all its witchery and power, — ay, and better than the young girl now basking in its light. Well had it been for her had she passed on with averted glance; but now she had read all his new-born passion, all his forgetfulness of herself.

For a moment the graceful form which had full oft crossed those halls the mistress of a monarch's heart wavered, while the breath grew faint upon her lip. The trembling fingers clasped the rich chain worn with careless grace about the slender throat, as if even that light weight were oppressive. A breath of air stole in through an open casement, fresh from the dewy forest beyond; it kissed lovingly the poor, wan cheeks and closing eyes, and once more Francoise de Foix roused herself to meet her destiny.

It was early day, — a soft, warm summer morning, and the tremulous rays of the rising sun quivered over dew-laden flowers, and rested on the forest boughs, while the sweet song of the wild bird floated upon the silent air.

Still through the shrouded casements of many a tall window struggled the expiring rays of the night-lamp, fading in the dawning light of day. From one casement alone the velvet drapery was withdrawn, and there sat a quiet watcher of the new-born day. But hers had been a long and weary watch. She had sat there while the evening star arose and went out, through the long night, statue-like, with rigid features and laboring breath, her agonized glance bent upon the long row of windows looking forth from the king's chamber. Suddenly her lips quivered, and she bent eagerly forward, as a figure emerged from the opposite wing, and came slowly along the terrace, with his cap drawn low over his brow. One glance sufficed to tell the still watcher that it was Francis himself. For the first time the hand loosed its hold on the curtain, and there, deep imbedded in the soft vel-

vet, was the print of four taper fingers. The watcher smiled mournfully upon that agonized impressure; it told how terrible was the struggle within her. Slowly, for she was weak and faint, she folded a mantle about her, covering the crushed robes of yesterday's toilet, and, opening the door, went forth.

With folded arms and drooping head, slowly down the terrace came the king. Close within the shadow of many trees was a bank blooming with flowers. By its side, with one slender arm wound about a tree for support, stood the wretched one — Francoise de Foix. The breeze wafted her robe to his side, and her breath was almost upon his cheek, ere he was aware of her presence.

With a slight start, and a glance full of displeasure, Francis looked upon the cold, pale face before him.

"The Countess of Chautebriand! This pleasure was indeed unanticipated!" and, with freezing courtesy, the cap was raised from the royal brow.

"I am here, sire, to crave one kindly word ere I go hence." She spoke very low, as if she had scarce power for utterance. "Will you not speak to me, smile upon me, once, before I quit your presence forever?"

"Leave me!" he said.

She started and clasped her hands, advancing a step to his side; but he drew back, and, lifting his cap, swept the green turf with its plume as he spoke. "The Countess of Chautebriand will accept our thanks for the bright presence which has long graced our court. Farewell, Madame de Chautebriand!"

The lady bent her fair head as the monarch's hat was replaced, and with the same unmoved and courteous bearing he passed onward.

Those dimmed but still beautiful eyes followed him until the last glimpse of his mantle was lost amid the trees; then she too turned to go. But when she unloosed her hold upon the tree, and took a step forward, she fell prone upon the

green bank, crushing the dewy flowers as she lay there utterly unconscious.

Many moments went by, when a light footstep drew near ; then a low, frightened cry arose, and the girl Ninette sank down by that prostrate form, and, raising the drooping head, laid it gently in her lap, smoothing back the damp hair, and pressing her lips lovingly to the cold brow. Gradually the eyelids unclosed ; slowly consciousness returned to the unhappy woman ; but still she lay there in the deepening light of day, her hands folded nearly on her bosom.

“ Will you not try and go in, dear lady ? There will be passers by here anon,” said Ninette.

But the beautiful sufferer only murmured, mournfully, “ Let me lay here — here where he has killed me, and die ! ”

Scarcely, however, had she spoken, when there arose a low, chirping cry, and a bird lit on a spray of roses by her side. For a moment it glanced its bright eye restlessly around ; the next, and it warbled forth a low, plaintive song. With the first note Francoise de Foix hushed her sobs, and all silent and motionless she lay listening to its wild melody. It was the song of a bird peculiar to Brittany ; once only had she heard it since she left her home. Ninette marked the white lips quiver, and the tears gathering slowly upon the long lashes ; and still, as if inspired, the bird sang on. Francoise buried her face within her hands, and wept. Soft and cool over the parched spirit fell those heaven-born tears of a mother’s love.

In low, whispered accents upon the summer air arose the prayer for pardon, and strength to do her duty.

The great battle of life had been fought ; sick to death with the strife, the human heart was turning in contrition to its Maker ; and with the earnest prayer came strength and resignation.

Long the sunset lingered in the spacious chamber of an ancient and stately chateau in Brittany, as if with its bright

beams it would fain warm into beauty the dark oaken panels and draperies of that cold and silent chamber. As the daylight faded and the shadows thickened, one with a pale, thin face rose up from her watch by the side of a couch, about which fell dark and heavy curtains, which she withdrew.

Few would have recognized the once smiling face of the gay Ninette in that care-worn prisoner; but the waning light rested upon one who lay there weak and helpless, and far more sadly changed. Sorrow and remorse had worked a fearful havoc in the once perfect beauty of that face.

Fearfully attenuated, but still white and transparent, one frail arm lay upon the pillow, over which fell a cloud of golden hair, as soft and luxuriant in its beauty as when jewels had flashed amid its bands. She was asleep, and dreaming, Ninette knew by the faint smile creeping to the lip that never smiled but in her dreams, when she would often murmur, "Anne." Ninette had beheld those lips quiver more than once as she lay there in that lonely chamber, heart-broken but unrepining, and as a distant laugh had at times echoed on her ear. But she knew that it was only the unconquerable emotion of the mother's heart. No rebellious thought ever arose in that penitent breast against the stern will that held her a meek captive in the most remote chamber of that home to which she had returned, where the music of her child's voice alone might echo on her solitude, mocking her with the happiness which she had forfeited.

As the smile faded from her lip she awoke, and there was an unusual brilliancy in those sunken eyes as she glanced toward Ninette.

"Does he know that I am dying?" she asked, very faintly.

Ninette bowed her head, and her tears fell fast upon the cold hand of her mistress.

All at once a faint color stole over the cheek of Françoise, as a distant step fell on her ear. She put back her falling hair, and listened intently to the coming footsteps.

She strove to rise from her pillow as the door opened, but she had no strength. Two persons came slowly forward, and stood before her. The one, a man, with a pale, stern face, and many a silver thread woven amid his dark locks; the other, a girl, young and singularly beautiful, but her cheek flushed, her bearing haughty, and an expression of strange sternness on her youthful face.

A wild, eloquent glance sought hers, and the color faded from the girl's cheek, the blue eyes grew dim.

The girlish figure bent down to meet that imploring glance. Tears gushed to her eyes, and fell warm upon that tortured countenance.

“Mother, *my own mother!*” broke the terrible silence.

“Anne!” She spoke but the one word, and the girl's arms were wound about her. The cold lips met her child's in one long, lingering caress; and a smile of ineffable joy stole over her face.

“Mother, mother!” broke out again upon the silence. But the voice which had answered her was forever hushed. Francoise de Foix was dead!

THE STATUED GATEWAY.

SINCE my far childhood oft I've paused to gaze
On two fair forms wrought in the ancient days,
Grand with the glory of the olden time,
Carved from pale marble in a sunlit clime.

Before a mansion dark with age they stand,
Guarding its portals with a proud command ;
There rest the day's first gleam and latest glow,
Summer's warm smile and Winter's mantling snow.

For them young Spring unfolds her earliest flowers ;
There the sweet lilac pours its perfumed showers ;
There Autumn leaves are hurtled by the blast,
To nestle where their shadows once were cast.

Worn stones beneath bear trace of many feet,
Footsteps long vanished from the crowded street ;
Youth grew to manhood, manhood trembled back
To feebler step, upon that ancient track.

Perchance glad eyes have looked in loving light
On those pale faces, gleaming through the night,
That oft, through after years, in wild despair,
Questioned their tranquil beauty, watching there.

They guard a household, warders at its gate,
With all the solemn secrets of its fate ;

The hearth-stone's shrine, its glory and its gloom,—
Its buds of promise shorn for heavenly bloom.

Silent, like Hope and Memory, they keep
Their marble rest, while mortals watch and weep :
Her glance uplifted to celestial spheres ;
His, darkly looking down the vale of years.

THE HOMESTEAD.

“ He who loveth not, knoweth not God ;
For God is love.”

CHAPTER I.

SOME distance back from the road leading to the village of Medford, there stands an old-fashioned country-house. Tall elm-trees throw their shadow over its antique portico and narrow casements ; but the glory of a summer day — a day made up of sunbeams and zephyrs — penetrates the affluent June foliage of those forest-trees, and fills every nook and chamber, except one, with its spirit-cheering light.

In that chamber the blinds are closed. The muslin curtains fall in many a snow-white fold to the cool matting upon the floor. But the fragrance of flowers, and the perfume of the dewy meadow lands that sweep in many a wide acre about the ancient house, breathe mockingly to the tortured sufferer within of the exuberant beauty and life without. For a human being lies there, with life's strength fainting into death's weakness, and wrestling the while with the unconquerable adversary of mortality.

From the setting of yesterday's sun, Hannah Worthington knew that she must die before many hours ; and, with the ebbing of her strength, the desire for a prolonging of her days had grown apace. Not that life was dear to her in its usual acceptation — much happiness, near kindred ties.

The first frost of girlish disappointment had congealed into

ice in her breast with the lapse of time. The once gay blue eyes had grown stony in their expression. She taught herself to believe that the cold, passionless routine of her daily duties was alone acceptable in the eye of God, sternly repressing every natural impulse, every desire of a softer birth.

And thus she passed frigidly on to nearly half a century ; accounting herself, with arrogant pride, her Father in heaven's well-beloved and faithful child. No charity for human frailties, in all that time, had from her lips ever shed its divine sunshine over an erring spirit. And yet none ever craved material aid who left her empty-handed.

But woe to her, or to him, who failed in the measure which she meted out as duty, if of her they sought favor. "Go thou and sin no more !" fell never in hallowed accents from her lips, when the broken-hearted penitent knelt a suppliant at her feet.

When or where she accepted the stern creed, which she hugged to her heart until that death-hour, I know not. Perchance it was born in that hour of life's bitterest travail when love and faith gave way to their deadly opponents, falsehood and despair ; perchance it grew into strength in the daily manifestation of her own father's life, — a life unhallowed by love of God or man.

However it might have been, in the end it gained the mastery over the home circle, and ruled there with a despotism like nothing else on earth.

Even the stern old man, who looked with haughty defiance on the passing of time which was bearing him swiftly forward to the day when his tall figure, which spurned the usual decrepitude of extreme age, should lie low in the grave, — even he felt its subtle influence reacting on him. And now the tread of many feet in the chamber above told him that Hannah Worthington, his eldest child, she who had filled from her youth her dead mother's place in his home, was dying ; but he stirred not.

Aslant his gray head fell the mellow light — over his withered cheek, his clasped and trembling hands; but the warmth of the sunlight fell cold upon his cheek, with the gray hue of ashy terror thereon. In the fiercest carnage of battle John Worthington's cheek had paled not as then. The spirit of the old Revolutionist, which had thrilled to the deafening roar of battle, lay faint and tremulous within his bosom; for he knew now of a fiercer conflict going on beneath his roof.

Once, with tottering, feeble steps, he had essayed to approach the death-bed; but the shrill, tremulous voice, praying "God's mercy for him, the gray-haired, sinful old man," and, with yet greater anguish, entreating pardon for herself, who had sinned even more than he, — she who had professed herself the faithful disciple of His holy word, calling on God for yet another life-lease, that, rising up once more, she might better do his bidding, — this he heard, and knew these words to be to her of bitter significance.

Now in the sunlight sat the old man, driven off from the shadow of that death-bed, which, had it followed a life of wider charity, of holier, broader Christian views, — had been lit by the effulgence of divine hope and peaceful faith, — something of its peace and trust had, perchance, dispelled the gloom of his soul.

But a sadder doubt than any which grew into dogged, stubborn resolution in his heart was engendered that day in the brain of youth, by another witness of Hannah Worthington's death.

All the morning a boy of eight or nine years of age had been playing beneath the portico, or out upon the lawn, casting furtive and wistful glances at intervals into the open hall, and up the oaken staircase leading to the upper chambers.

There was an expression of vague sadness and curiosity depicted upon his expressive countenance; and more than once he stole cautiously into the house, and listened at the chamber-door, only to turn away hurriedly, and seek the free

air and light of open day with a heavy sigh, as if some new-born terror had entered his brain.

No one noticed him. Even his grandfather, who was wont to pass his hand fondly over his brown hair, and gaze proudly into the sunny eyes uplifted to his own, had suffered him to stand by his side wholly unregarded.

When the sun was near to the meridian the distant voices of children returning from school drew him down the lawn to the gate opening to the road, and, sitting down beneath the shadow of the lilacs arching the gateway, he awaited the passing of his playmate, John Spenser. By and by a group of boys came trooping along, with this friend among them; and he, perceiving the lonely boy sitting there, detached himself from the rest, and sat down by his side.

To the boy's eager questioning Harry replied, "Aunt Hannah is dying!" and then his companion's face took the same half-frightened, awe-struck expression which Harry's had worn.

The day previous, as they sat there talking, they had anticipated, with something very like pleasure, the period of Harry's release from the thralldom of his aunt's guardianship; but they now scarcely ventured to give words to the hope which was swelling mutually within their hearts, of a less rigorous, a milder sway, on the part of his younger aunt, "Dear Aunt Bessie," as he had been sometimes permitted to call her whose charge he was henceforth to become. There was that in the near presence of death which sobered even the sense of coming joy.

But when John Spenser ventured gravely to assert that "Miss Worthington was so good herself she would not mind dying," Harry looked very grave, and then, in a mysterious whisper, went on to tell him that "Aunt Hannah had been bad all along; a wicked woman, and was afraid to die." He had heard her, he affirmed, confess the above; and now he declared that he would "not be good her way any more."

Harry Worthington's conception of goodness was strict obedience to the regulations which his aunt had laid down for the rigid observance of the Sabbath, and all things appertaining to that religion to which she had consecrated nothing of the holiness of love, nothing of the beauty of peace. Many an hour of childish serenity had been turned to one of bitterest strife and passionate rebellion by some chance oversight of her charge.

For a time the two boys sat talking together in subdued, whispering tones; then John arose, and, casting a shy, curious glance towards the house, went on his way. But a long time Harry sat there, pondering over the self-accusing words of the dying woman, and wondering if everybody would now know how wicked she had been. With secret joy he anticipated telling a certain old lady, who had been in the habit of coming there, and regarding his boyish foibles with the same severity with Aunt Hannah, counselling him ever to better imitation of her virtues, how he had found her out, at last, to be no better than himself, with all her pretended goodness.

The afternoon was half gone when he approached the house, and all there was still, — very still. The blinds had been closed, and the whole place wore a hushed and solemn aspect. His grandfather no longer sat in the sunlight, but in a darkened room, with his eyes bent vacantly on the floor; and, as he looked through a half-open door, Harry caught from within a low, stifled moan from his Aunt Bessie.

But not until evening did the icy terror of death, which had been creeping all day into his heart, settle down there with all its appalling realization. The white sheet drawn straight over the head and the feet was turned back; and the vision of that frozen, haggard face, lying there in the still, soft summer evening, fixed itself forever in his brain.

"I will not be good any longer her way;" and, with this resolve in his heart, the boy shut his ear henceforth to a religion which seemed to him so shallow and narrow a thing;

while the recklessness of youth waxed apace with the dawning of manhood, and the memory which clung upas-like through all years to the recollection of his boyhood

CHAPTER II.

“ To me, a dream without a name,
A sadder thought :
To thee, a strong religious flame,
A fearless spirit in thine eyes.”

O'CONNER.

Nearly fourteen years had passed since the events related in the preceding chapter. The roses of June were in their glory, and Harry Worthington's return to the homestead was hourly expected, after a long absence in foreign lands. But the roses lay withered and dead on the green turf, and still he came not, though the first flush of early summer had ripened into the rich fruitage of September. All through the morning there had been an unwonted stir and bustle throughout the old house, and the sun's rays gilded portico and casement as on the far-off June day when Hannah Worthington had died. But its beams rested on other tombstones than her own, with the name of the family graven thereon. The old man had been found sleeping his last sleep, with no trace of the last battle which he had fought on his passionless face.

But out of the very gloom of their death there had been infused into the place a spirit so pure, so joyous, as to irradiate the whole house with its sunshine.

In her loneliness Bessie Worthington had taken a young orphan child, utterly destitute, with no other claim than that of youth and helplessness upon any human being. She had been, however, well repaid for the care and bounty which she bestowed, by the girl's fulfilment of the promise of her childhood, as she grew in years, with a face of winning beauty, a gay spirit, and a warm, loving heart.

When Harry Worthington had been last at home, Hope Raymond was but a child of tender years, whom memory recalled with the recollection of boyhood.

The grave, sweet eyes, the braided golden hair, with the fair face, mantled with the flush of youth and health, which he met upon his return, kindled at once his admiration and his regard.

A connoisseur in woman's loveliness, from his long artistic studies of the fairest living subjects, and his intimate acquaintance with the wondrous beauty of the finished models of the dead masters' portraiture of bygone years, he was well fitted for a ready and true appreciation of the peculiar and delicious beauty of the young, unconscious subject who sat before his easel in the little studio which had been fitted up in the old house for his use.

Experience in life's conflicts, with the passage of time, had more than ordinarily changed the character of the boy.

With his tall stature, spare through study and vigil, but graceful from habitual ease,—his countenance, intellectual and expressive, through the cultivation of genius, native-born and high, which redeemed from all appearance of imbecile sensuality the full blue eyes and expressive mouth,—but with boyhood's sunny light forever stricken from his face by the life which he had led, Harry Worthington came back to his home.

If, in the shadow which had fallen across the lineaments of youth, one might read the dim outline of a stormy conflict with life's high duties yet to come, the revelation of his bosom's secrets would prestige the actuality of what those features' change but dimly prophesied.

With the scepticism of his youth grown into the bold and subtle sophistries of maturer life, not the highest code of the honor of conventionalism, which he chivalrously professed, could stand a shield between one who should found a human hope on such faith as his and the danger of that trust.

The studio which he fitted up for himself, with his adroit and ready skill, was in the upper story of the old house, hitherto used but as a lumber-room; and it grew, even in his own appreciation, into an agreeable abode in which to indulge his dreamy reveries; while Hope, charmed with the novelty and congeniality of the spot, expressed, with girlish enthusiasm, her delight.

And not all the southern hue and splendor of the golden, fragrant atmosphere and light which had once illumed his foreign atelier had been half so enchanting as the chance sunbeams which fell over the slight figure standing by his side, while he gathered back the curtain muffling the casement, and together they gazed upon the far-stretching meadow lands, high woods, and winding river, before them; — she full of happiness, and a grateful sense of the joy and peace of a pure and perfect life; he half subdued and made pure by the contact of her presence.

In her companionship with Harry Worthington, Hope Raymond experienced none of that first reserve and shyness which she would have felt toward one less intimately connected than he had been with her for years; and therefore she had installed him at once, on his arrival, to the privileges of her nearest friend, next to her whom she had called alike with himself “Aunt Bessie.”

And Harry Worthington had joined, as her adopted brother, in her daily pleasures, her pleasant avocations; but he never had for a single moment forgotten that no tie of consanguinity held them in unison. He remembered it always with a strange, indefinable sense of pleasure, even while he ceased not to recognize an insurmountable barrier which must forever debar him from a closer connection with Hope Raymond.

Rapidly, imperceptibly to them both, time was passing away; and autumn was harvesting the brightest hours of the

girl's young life, the saddest and the maddest of his own wild manhood.

The portrait of Hope made but slow progress towards completion. It seemed as if the artist's skill failed to portray the master's true conception of a correct likeness of the patient model who sat there, hour after hour, day after day, in serene, contented obedience to his desire. The coloring was never quite right; the ideal upon his canvas seemed less perfect than the actual; and yet a less interested observer would have thought the fair, sweet face which looked forth upon him bore no poor comparison to that of the original.

But at length the artist himself confessed that he could do no more.

It was the last day of autumn. The gale of the preceding night was subsiding, but still the wind moaned drearily about the casements, and with every fresh gust the rain-drops broke heavily upon the window-panes.

Fierce had been the storm over night; but it was as nothing in its height to the tempest of passion and despair which had been driving through the breast of one man.

All alone in his distant chamber, with a letter crushed in impotent anger before him, had Harry Worthington fought a fierce battle with honorable duty and selfish desire.

The very spirit which was tempting him to sin and ruin, and the remnant of duty and virtue yet left him, the good angel of his life, had, to his excited fancy, stood there embodied in the half-lighted room, and together fought the combat, the result of which he was to abide forever.

The trace of the storm was visible in his haggard cheek and his sunken eyes; but they who looked upon him that day in their innocent guilelessness attributed his haggard cheek and feverish glance alone to the body's ailment.

Until a late hour in the afternoon, Hope had not seen Harry Worthington, when he sent for her to his studio.

Again he was to paint her portrait ; she was to sit to him, but not in the simple costume which she was wont to wear. To the caprice of his fancy the girl had yielded, with her wonted alacrity in giving pleasure to those whom she loved ; and she did love Harry Worthington, though the depth of that love she had never yet sought to fathom.

In a brocaded robe, of the quaint make and costly fabric of a century previous, which had been treasured, from almost time immemorial, in the Worthington family ; with leaves of autumn's brilliant dyes braided into her glistening hair, and flushed with pleasure by the expectation of his delight, she knocked softly at his closed door. There was a glow such as Hope Raymond had never before beheld there on Harry Worthington's cheek, as she swept gracefully past him into the little room, the faded but costly train trailing heavily over the white matting of the floor, as she took her accustomed seat. But both brush and easel were thrust aside. Those turbulent blue eyes bent themselves upon her as he took the little trembling hands within his own ; and the girl's cheek flushed to a deep, warm glow, that grew mellow in the roseate hue of happiness, as her companion spoke.

Only once the sweet face grew thoughtful, and that was when he bade her say nothing of what had passed that day to his aunt ; but she did not doubt that he had good and urgent reasons for his request.

The leaves of crimson and gold which Hope Raymond had braided into her hair she placed that night in the Bible which lay upon the table of her chamber ; for they were henceforth consecrated relics of the gladdest hour of a gay, glad life.

Again and again, in her antique robe, Hope sat to her artist lover. And now Harry Worthington no longer lingered over the face growing into wondrous loveliness upon his canvas ; but, as the portrait approached its completion, it was of a type very different from that of the first painting.

Now, while he painted with conscious and subtle art, with the eloquence of adroit reasoning he was seeking to instil something of his own scepticism into the guileless heart, which would have rejected at once, with fear and quick abhorrence, the bold avowal of infidelity.

But gradually, as, half-mystified, she listened, the grave, sweet eyes took a deeper light, a less passionless expression; the fever of unrest, which for the first time entered the spirit of her youth, burnt in a glowing color upon her cheek.

In the rapid expansion of her intellect which daily communion with him developed, the expression of Hope Raymond's countenance assumed a different and more striking character; but it had lost the serenity of a hitherto unruffled existence. When side by side Harry Worthington placed the two likenesses of the girl, then he perceived how great was the change in that face; and he knew that the last painted was the type of a spirit more closely assimilated to himself than the first had been.

Standing on the hearth of the little parlor where herself and aunt had just breakfasted, — for Harry was away on a brief visit to the city, — Hope Raymond spread her hands to the cheerful blaze in the wide, open fireplace.

As she stood there she gazed thoughtfully, almost sadly, down upon the quaint and rare device of a ring of antique workmanship, with which her finger had been encircled but a few days before, — “the symbol of the tie which made her,” Harry Worthington had told her, “his own;” and in the glance of his eye, in the brief words which he had then spoken, she had comprehended his rejection, his contempt, of a further solemnization of the love which he professed. But she had not refused its acceptance. The belief of her lover had not yet become her own; but the mirage of a first scepticism lay cold on her brain.

All at once she caught the reflection of herself in the glass above the mantel-piece, and reason questioned, stern and true,

if the flushed but care-worn countenance reflected therein was such as the blessed realization of a pure heart's hopes should have stamped in peace and joy thereon; and as the girl looked, with a sudden sharp pang of terror at her heart, she saw that the innocence and guilelessness once depicted there had faded perceptibly with the deeper coloring of the cheek, the darker light of the eyes.

Presently the clear, ringing chime of the far-off church-bell broke upon the silence of the morning; and, turning round, she beheld the frost-work melting slowly from the window-panes, the first time for many years ungarlanded by the green leaves and red berries of winter's evergreens on Christmas morning. An earnest desire, an irresistible impulse, carried her to her chamber, there to envelop herself in her cloak. She did not stop to adjust, with the little harmless vanity of olden times, the ribands of her hat, or the braids within; but went hurriedly down again, as if fearful that the sudden impulse which was leading her, for the first time for many a week, to church, would leave her as swiftly as it had come.

The deep snow which covered the ground was hard frozen; the trees were laden with many a pendant of glittering ice, and over all fell the dazzling rays of the unclouded sun. Something there was in the invigorating atmosphere of the morning, and the exercise of her long and rapid walk, that cleared the shadow from her brow, and lifted the gloom from her heart.

The old church was dark with the drapery of its Christmas wreaths. The choir were chanting the anthem of the Nativity, when Hope Raymond, kneeling where she had knelt since early childhood, with her head bowed low, felt her limbs tremble, her cheek pale, with the agony of the mockery of that position on the part of one, as she now, for the first time, clearly and fully realized, trembling well-nigh on the verge of infidelity.

But soon the burden of the weak and erring spirit's prayer,

"Save us from temptation!" reverberated through the chaos of her despair. God and the angels alone knew how great had been her danger and temptation, how abiding was her penitence.

All alone, in the moonlight, sat Hope in the deserted studio. She had stolen away from the companionship of Aunt Bessie; she could not join in the old lady's gossiping humor that night, worn and agitated as she felt herself by the experience of the day.

There was no fire in the room; but the girl felt neither the cold nor the absence of other light; for the moonbeams came down through the window in the roof, and bathed her in their frigid glory, as she sat there in Harry's easy-chair, with a dread of coming grief mingling with the new-born peace of the morning.

Gradually phantom fancies took possession of her, strange visions flitted before her mind. In the still evening she was dreaming a wild dream of joy and of woe.

She stood in the shadow of those Christmas wreaths, and the moonlight, which then streamed over her sleeping face, was the sun's radiance pouring through the chancel window, and resting on her bridal-crowned hair; but the choir chanted requiems for the dead, and, looking on Harry Worthington's face, she saw that the expression there was one of defiance and of mockery, while there stole over his heart, through the purity of his bridal vestments, a deep-red stain, as if human blood flowed slowly from a wound beneath, and the wedding-ring which he placed on her finger slipped from thence with irresistible force, and fell to the ground.

But it was not quite all a dream. Harry Worthington had returned; he was standing before her, and the ring which he had given her had indeed slipped from her finger, and lay at his feet.

Surprised at finding her sleeping there in the cold and

deserted chamber, he was about to awake her, when she started up with a cry of fear and horror.

He endeavored to subdue her agitation, and strove to smile away the emotion which the recital of her dream awoke in his own breast. But when he would have replaced the ring, Hope withdrew her hand from his, and, though her voice wavered as she spoke, her words were firm and resolute.

"When you first gave this to me, dear Harry, I did not comprehend, in the moment's happy excitement of finding myself your betrothed wife, the avowal which you then made; and I cannot again accept from you a token of an affection which recognizes no holier consecration than its own secret avowal. No more, dear Harry, dare I become your wife, knowing, as I now do, from your own lips, that you look on marriage but as an idle form of conventionalism, which you would, without scruple, at once reject, had you the power."

"I did not expect this of you, Hope. What has changed you thus since I left you?" His tones were bitter; he questioned her with stern imperiousness.

She grieved not over the coldness of those hitherto gentle tones, as she did over the weakness and apostasy of her own heart, which had given him the right to thus question her; and she answered, sorrowfully and meekly,

"Communion with my own spirit in the solitude of your absence, and the consciousness of the delusion with which an earthly affection has blinded me, to a wilful doubt of that which, in my inmost soul, I know to be true; and, more than all else, dear Harry, do I grieve over the bitter fruit of my degeneracy, which I now reap in the lasting conviction that I, who have been found vulnerable to the doubts of scepticism, may never be to you the humble instrument of God's mercy in leading you to a recognition of His infinite tenderness towards His children. O, Harry! O, Harry! would that I had not sinned, less for my own sake than thine, my beloved!"

And, in her grief, she hid her face upon the breast that no longer in coldness rejected her.

"First for my sake, then for His," whispered Hope, in tenderest, imploring accents, as Harry Worthington looked, with strange, sad eyes, upon her tearful countenance, and strove to still the tumult in his own breast.

So long did he remain silent, so intense was his agitation, which portrayed itself in the changing expression of his countenance ere he answered her, that a nameless dread of the words which she saw he was about to utter came over the heart of Hope.

"You are very cold, — you are shivering, my love!" and Harry Worthington folded his own cloak about her; for he felt that she would grow colder yet with his words. And then he went far back into the past, recalling the day of Hannah Worthington's death, and the rigorous years of her guardianship which had preceded it.

"With my boy-heart hardened into unnatural obduracy by her constant reproaches, her never-ceasing rebukes, I at that period cherished the secret belief which she ever openly professed of the natural depravity of my nature. Suddenly Hannah Worthington was called to yield that exemplary Christian life of hers, which was deemed a model for her fellow-beings. Death summoned her in the pride of that life; and O, Hope Raymond! let me tell you how the dread messenger found *her* prepared for that journey.

"The mystery of that chamber of death won the boy from his play to look within upon it. Scarce his childish mind could comprehend the burden of the words falling from her lips, quivering with anguish, blanched with a terror more ashy in its hue than the death-shadow veiling all those haggard lineaments. He only knew that she, the good woman, feared to go, and in that coward fear expressed herself sinful in the extreme; and when again he looked in, in the still evening time, upon her dead face, there was nothing there of that

mysterious serenity which fills the soul of a human being at peace with God and man; but fear, fierce agony, was frozen there in death.

“And the boy went out the succeeding day into the sunlight of the morning with an unburdened life, the weight of his past belief in his own sin lifted from his soul. ‘I will be good her way no more,’ I said to myself; and thereafter there was more freedom, more happiness, in my boyhood. A second time I looked on death. I found him whom I had heard my Aunt Hannah and her friends term sinful through his unbelief in their God, — him, the proud, high-spirited old man, stricken from a life, vigorous even in its extreme age, to death, — alone, dead in his chair; and that face bore no vestige of the conflict which Death had engraved upon that of his child; and I may never forget the contrast between the two.

“Hope, I have thought myself a strong man; I have been vain, boastful of the vigor of my youth. Look upon me now; I am weak as a little child; for the burden of my life is greater than I have courage in words to reveal to you. The words which I would speak are fainting into silence on my lips; I cannot utter them. But before you leave me to-night, Hope Raymond, — before you open this letter, which I give you to read, — let me impress upon your remembrance that I was in ignorance of its contents — that I did not wilfully deceive your trust in me. And, Hope, remember always that I bind myself not to the belief which binds most men, — that I as openly, henceforth, reject, thoroughly condemn, the narrow and arbitrary forms which would bind me, body and soul, to imbecile submission to infamy and misery. I ask you not, Hope, for a love which will give itself as a sacrifice, with fear at its vitals, to corrode its peace and purity; not for a heart which will thrill with shame while it yields to its desire. But, Hope Raymond, if the miserable shackles with which the tuition of that grand tutor, society, has fettered your soul, fall

forever from thence, come to me, my beloved ! To thee earth shall make itself a heaven in Harry Worthington's love ! ”

There was passion in his glance, there was madness in his tones ; but his companion shrank not from his violence, or trembled at his words. She was girding up the strength of a pure heart, and subduing the wounded pride of maidenhood to answer him fitly.

“ If you lack strength, Harry Worthington, to make to me your confession, to lay bare to me the secrets of your life which it is needful that I should know, your weakness is not mine. I can listen ; and, surely, if I can listen, you can speak. From your own lips, I beseech you, suffer me to learn what I can better endure, if of great pain, to hear from yourself.”

He took back the letter which he had proffered her. Once or twice he paced that little chamber, luminous now with the full light of the moon ; and then he spoke, but his voice was hoarse with suppressed passion.

“ In Florence there is one whom the world calls my wife, one who calls herself woman. You start now — you rise — you are going now, Hope. I thought you said, but now, you would listen to what I might say.”

“ There can be nothing more for me to hear ! ”

He could not tell whether it was despair or pride that steadied her voice to a tone so clear and quiet ; but he answered, “ There is more that you should, that you shall hear, Hope. No affection ever sanctified the tie which she assumed, and I yielded to her desire. In the mad, intoxicating life I led in Florence, a brilliant face glowed upon my delirium ; the woman who called that brilliancy her own saved a life which time has proved too worthless, too miserable, to have been spared. In gratitude for the useless boon, I gave her what she asked. She knew well then no faith of mine consecrated the idle mockery which made her, in man's eyes, my wife ; but she whom I would have endeavored to love with

truth and fidelity had deceived me. She was unworthy of affection; we parted in disgraceful conflict, and I returned home with the belief that the grave hid her sin, my misery. With this conviction, in the first stages of our intercourse here I did not feel that, even in the eyes of the world, my love for you was a guilty love.

“But later, when the fatal tidings reached me that that wretched existence which had been chained to mine was still prolonged, even as my lips first syllabled what my looks for weeks had told you, I yet determined, spite of the harsh judgment of my fellow-beings, to persevere in my endeavors to make you mine. But I refute the falsehood with which the world would assail me! I recognize not the bondage with which it would make me a slave evermore, — a miserable outcast from human tenderness and human love! Will you leave me now, Hope, with ruthless scorn, with proud rejection of a love which is wholly pure save the stain with which society would blacken it?”

“Not in scorn, not in coldness or pride, and not that the shadow which would rest upon its acceptance would be visible to human eyes, — not for fear of man, but in obedience to God’s word, — do I now and forever reject your affection; — reject it even while the prayer, the one earnest desire, of this life, will be that a love of more ineffable tenderness, of more hallowed peace, than can fill man’s bosom for human object — love for our Father in heaven, Harry — may fill your being soon with that peace which passeth all understanding!” And, with her head drooping reverently forward, her lips still syllabling a half-audible prayer to God for his salvation and happiness, Hope Raymond glided away from beneath the moon-lighted window in the roof, and was gone.

Her words had subdued the passion of his heart; nothing was left there but sorrow, and a wild, earnest longing to believe with her in that Refuge from this world’s trials.

Very, very weary Hope Raymond entered her own

chamber, after leaving Harry Worthington, and sat herself down before the table, upon which lay a Bible that had once been her mother's. Half unconscious of what she did in that hour of heavy trial, but with a vague longing for comfort for her aching heart, she turned back the time-worn cover, and there, on the white leaf, lay the crisp buds, the gold and crimson leaves.

Through the bitter memories which they conjured up, a keener poignancy of woe, a drearier desolation, she beheld the name written therein in the wavering lines and uncertain characters of the mother's dying hand. "Hope Raymond!" — was not that a name of bitter mockery for her whose life-burden seemed so heavy? But a little further, and, "save her from temptation, — keep her from sin!" written in clear, legible letters, met her despairing eye, and in that simple prayer there lay a mine of more than common strength.

"No more thy charnel glooms the soul appall,
Pale Azrael! awful eidolon of Death!
The dawn-light breaks athwart thy glimmering hall,
And thy dank vapors own the morning's breath."

Again there is heard the pleasant whisper of summer stealing through the old house, and murmuring its gay song of sunlit skies and breezy woodlands in its inmates' ears, even as on the day when Hannah Worthington died, two-and-twenty years ago.

And now, as then, closed blinds and falling curtains bar out the sunlight, and something of the garden's perfume. Of those that were present on that day, one alone remains; and child-like grief has taken the place of the wonted contentment of Aunt Bessie; for the joy of her age lies like a broken blossom with drooping petals, its beauty not quite all gone, upon the couch before her.

Since early day the wing of the death-angel has cast its shadow over the watchers' hearts; for they have known since

then that the Reaper's shining sickle has wavered long, impatient to gather the fruitage of affluent youth into the garner-house of death.

But the girl, sick unto the failing of all hope, lies with still, calm eyes awaiting the Reaper's coming. The fever of suffering has paled her face to the hue of the white June roses that lie on her pillow.

All at once the calm eyes grow starry in the light of an earth-born hope; for there is a ringing step in the hall below, which all present hear.

Once more a form glides up that stairway, and bends its head to the door of that sick chamber. But the tall, broad-chested figure is not like that of the boy of other years. The sunshine of the spirit of youth, dim then but with the shadow of passing fear, has faded forever; but the intense, earnest light in those blue eyes, the pale, compressed lips, speak the heart's last, dying hope.

"She has gone!" broke, with fearful import to him, on his straining ear, as he stood, neither daring to enter or willing to depart.

"She has gone!" and the words bore him to her side. More than the agony of death he endured with the first glance which fell on the fair, still face of Hope.

"She is not dead, — she has but fainted!" said a voice, the calmness of which seemed but to mock his suffering and his despair, so little dared he trust to its assurance. "She has but fainted, — she will live!" it repeated once more, but in tones less calm and confident.

Not for hours afterwards did they dare to trust even the physician's words of hope. Not until she slept that placid sleep which brings health and healing in its wake, and he was suffered to gaze for a moment on the face which he had never again thought to look upon in life, did Harry Worthington dare to give way to the blessed and new-born joy of his heart.

The naïve confession of childhood, "I will be good no more her way," he recanted, in the simple prayer of "Suffer me, my God, to be like unto her!" as he turned aside from that sleeping girl to learn how placid was her submission — how entire her resignation to God's will, when he had called her from the joy of bridal preparations to that sick bed, from which she had never again thought to rise, to life's many hopes, earth's now great and manifest joys.

The tidings which Harry Worthington had received of the life of her whom he believed had died immediately after her desertion of himself were false. The past gave her not up, to burden his future life, her own soul, with further misery.

The seed which Hope Raymond, in her time of extremest suffering and sorest trial, had planted unconsciously, by the example of the strength of her faith in God and his love, ripened in her lover's heart into rich fruit in after time.

The vows which he pronounced at the bridal altar, when she stood there by his side a happy, trusting bride, were solemn with the realization of their hallowed import.

SPELLS OF MEMORY.

SWEET thought, entranced by memory,
Holds commune with the buried past;
Once more love's 'wilderer fantasy
Is o'er my yearning spirit cast.

To a lone niche beside the sea,
O'erhung with trembling aspen boughs,
Its mystic guidance leadeth me
To listen to low-murmured vows.

From the far portals of the west,
A tide of glory, clear and bright,
Floats o'er the waters' purpling breast,
And melts its darkness into light.

With syren hours I linger now, —
My heart revokes its wild despair;
Warm-clasping hands are on my brow,
Faint kisses touch my braided hair.

Like the dark wave, my shadowed soul
Grows radiant with reflected beams
From tender eyes, whose soft control
Enthralls me in elysian dreams.

But the sweet spell will not be stayed ;
 Its holy light grows faint and far ;
 Through solemn depths of rayless shade
 Scarce gleameth now one guiding star.

I press my cold hands on my heart,
 To feel its presence palsy there ;
 O, joy-lit hours, before we part
 Take back my blessing and my prayer !

Though Love recalls the light he gave,
 Tell him, " I know that it will rise
 To glow again on some pure wave,
 For I look upward to the skies."

THE CRAYON.

CHAPTER I.

“Thou art now in thy dreaming time ;
The green leaves on the bough,
The sunshine turning them to gold,
Are pleasures to thee now.”

THE sunset hour was at hand, but the bright orb lingered, with its soft rays glancing over dew-laden leaves, and kissing fair flowers, drooping as their day-love departed, as though loth to leave a world so fair. And its departing rays seemed to sigh over the little figure resting on a green bank, in the shadow of a white-walled cottage, standing half-way up the long hill sloping to the beautiful Connecticut river.

The flowers waving so lovingly about the little one were far less lovely than Loise Crayton, just budding into her twelfth summer, with her dark hazel eyes growing more eloquent each day of her life, the brown hair parted so smoothly over her broad white brow.

Yet it was not the perfect symmetry of each rounded limb, or the regularity of beautiful features, which arrested the eye ; not the mere outer loveliness, but the purity of the unclouded spirit, which, looking out from the depths of her eyes, shed a soft, sunny light over the whole youthful countenance. It spoke of a heart holy and pure as it came from its Maker, unclouded by grief, unshadowed by temptation.

A life full of childish happiness was Loise Crayton's ; but better had it been for her had those eyes dimmed more fre-

quently with tears which are born of childish grievances, that, when life's storms came, her spirit, taught like the flower to bend to the blast, had not reared itself erect in wayward courage.

It is not well with lavish tenderness to shut all knowledge of trial from the heart of youth; for love's watchful care, which has shielded those early days, may be powerless in maturer years, and, new to the warfare of grief, the young heart may break, or harden in rebellious pride.

Give to childhood the same bright measure of sunshine Heaven gives the flowers; but spare not those April showers, which give strength and beauty.

It would have been better for Loise had Mr. Crayton striven less sedulously to hide all knowledge of care or sorrow from the heart of his motherless child; while he, the ambitious man of the world, sought wealth in a distant land for herself and her brother, his brilliant boy, Edward, at whose rare intellectual gifts even then were waking deep notes of proud exultation in his bosom.

When the daylight faded Loise arose, and, with a slow, reluctant step entering the cottage, passed up stairs to her chamber. It was a pleasant room, with white curtains veiling a window darkened by the creeping vines without.

She paused before the low mantel-piece, and hung, with smiling care, a little picture in its place above. It was but a bit of coarse Bristol board, with a crayon sketch thereon. A man's head roughly drawn, and neither that of a young or handsome man; yet there was a certain power in the full, dark eyes set beneath the heavy brows, and about the lips a smile which it was pleasant to meet. Rude, uncomely, as the drawing might have been to the eye of a connoisseur, the most dainty form of sylph that ever smiled with cherub-face from magazine-plate was not half so captivating as the crayon to Loise Crayton.

It was a gift from the portfolio of some travelling painter,

who had stopped at Woodland to sketch the surrounding scenery. The gentle bearing of the painter had won the child's fancy, and on parting with her he had that day given her the little picture, for which she had made a moss frame, and hung it upon her chamber wall.

As she stood gazing upon it, all at once she raised herself impulsively on tip-toe, touching with her lips, with a warm, loving expression in her eyes, those which in that shadowy light appeared to smile softly upon her from the picture. Just then, some one called to her from below; and, passing her hand hurriedly over her brown hair, she went down.

The small, round tea-table was spread with its cloth of snow-white damask. From the tall, old-fashioned candlesticks fell a flood of light over the delicate tea-equipage, and the old lady who sat beside the little silver urn, with its many quaint and old-fashioned devices. She smiled pleasantly as Loise drew near, and motioned her companion to make room for her between them.

The girl sat down by her grandmother's side, and cast a sorrowful glance towards the vacant seat which had recently been occupied by her artist friend.

"We shall miss our good friend, shall we not, love?" said her grandmother, observing her. Loise sighed heavily.

"I wish we could always be perfectly happy, grandmamma!"

"That we can never expect to be, my darling; God has not so willed it. If we were, we might cease to remember that heaven which he has prepared for those who have been sorely tried and rebelled not."

"Such as Aunt Elsy," suggested Loise, glancing towards the lady who sat near her, and who, with the exception of her grandmother, had been from infancy her sole companion and instructress. She was a pale, grave-looking woman; early trials had left their impress on her countenance, and, rarely smiling, serene from habitual self-control, she passed her life in the passive fulfilment of her daily duties. No wonder that

the girl's quick discernment should embody in her presence the example of which the grandmother spoke.

The mother's eyes turned tenderly on her child, and Loise saw that she indeed numbered her Aunt Elsy among those whom God would summon to rest with those of his children who had been tried and rebelled not.

With gay words her companions strove to win Loise from her loneliness; but the first genuine heart-smile that flitted over her face came when the light was extinguished, and she turned upon her pillow, while her glance rested on the moon-lit wall, with the crayon's dark face thereon. And stern and dark it looked; but she knew that it was but the shadows of the night which hid the smile on its lip, the eloquent gleam of the eyes; and more than once she smiled, as her glance rested upon it. But after a while the white lids drooped languidly over the gazing eyes; one little hand was thrust, with careless grace, through the loosened hair, the graceful limbs settled into repose, and the girl slept.

Once or twice she stirred restlessly during the night, as a hurried step or louder voice from below mingled with her dreams; but still she slept on, unconscious of the sorrow which night was giving birth to, in silence and gloom.

In the first gray dawn of the succeeding day, hurriedly awakened from slumber, wild with fear and grief, she stood for the first time in the presence of death. Loise Crayton alone remembered, in after years, of having stood by her grandmother's side, with her hand resting upon her head; how, as it rested thereon, that head grew colder, and colder, until its icy touch thrilled through her whole being, and, with a wild, heart-breaking moan, she gazed on the rigidity of death.

For a time she gave herself up to passionate grief;—no wild outbreak of sorrow, but clinging to and covering with fond caresses the dead. For a while she vainly strove to cheat herself into the belief that the power of utterance was alone hushed. But, when the first sharp agony was over, and

through her falling tears she looked upon the faded face in its holy repose, she hushed her sobs, though the smile came not to her lip, and her bird-like song echoed not through Woodland for many a weary, dreary day.

The shadow of that death lay heavy on the hearts of many. Even on the face of Aunt Elsy there was drawn yet another line of sorrowful endurance; and when Edward Crayton went down to Woodland, on his grandmother's death, he also missed, with sad heart and swelling eyes, her gentle welcome. But, though grief filled all hearts, none rebelled against the decree which had smitten them; for we murmur not when the aged die.

On the morning of Edward's arrival, Loise sat alone in the parlor, on her usual low seat, drawn close to her grandmother's chair; but her head rested no more on the loved one's knee, but lay on the cushion as she wept.

The sun's rays were falling over her in a shower of glittering light, and her brother paused upon the threshold. As his glance rested upon her, his eyes dilated, and a glow of admiration lighted his boyish features. But, as he gazed, tears stole out from beneath those closed lids, and lay upon her cheek.

"Darling Loise," he whispered, tenderly; and she threw herself into his arms, and wept and smiled in alternate grief and joy. With affectionate assiduity he soothed her sorrow, and comforted her lonely heart, until, with a feeling of tranquil security from every other grief, she laid her head upon his shoulder and slept.

There was something even more than deep brotherly love and interest in his eye as he looked upon her then. The fair, childish face, with its closed lids slightly flushed by weeping, was turned upwards to his; the folds of her dress fell about him; the slight, rounded figure nestled to his breast in beautiful repose. It was not the mere pride of a relative with which he regarded her, but with an innate love of the beautiful

which was then rousing itself into being. How deeply he was impressed by that child-like loveliness was perceptible long afterwards, when the young artist's masterpiece — the child sleeping in his arms — touched many hearts, and won him warm applause.

CHAPTER II.

“When will your parting be, Sadness and Mirth?
Bright stream, and dark one! O, never on earth!

Five years have passed since last we beheld the inmates of Woodland. It is now early morning, but the curtain folded over the blue sky is withdrawn, and the glowing sun looks down with a deepening smile, while with their soft echoing notes the forest orchestra heralds the advent of day. The curtains of Woodland Cottage float out from the casements, and brush the dew-drops from the tall rose-bushes whose red leaves strew the green sward.

And from window to window, to and fro, flits a light figure, pausing occasionally to gather a rose from the bush near the window, or a sprig from the myrtle. The vases are filled to their utmost extremity; the little cambric collar has been many times adjusted before the old antique mirror, the brown curls smoothed. Now, all at once, the old mirror reflects a glowing, beaming face, as a carriage rolls rapidly up the avenue to the cottage; and then Loise Crayton bounds out upon the piazza, down the steps, into her brother's arms. “Dearest Loise, my friend Dorrance,” he says, as he remembers the gentleman by his side; and the girl turned towards him. There was a slight start; then a strange, wondering expression passed over her countenance, followed by a blush and a smile, as she gave him her hand in welcome.

It was the first time that Loise had ever seen her brother's friend, during the long intimacy which had existed between

Dorrance Sullivan and Edward Crayton. But Loise had become familiar with the earnest purpose of his life, in which her brother's revelation, always enthusiastic in regard to him, had deeply interested her. They had never met, and yet she knew every lineament of that face. She had looked upon its semblance by day and by night. Yes, there were the same eloquent eyes, the same large, stern features; but when Edward spoke, and Dorrance Sullivan smiled, his whole countenance became luminous, and, with a strange, indescribable sensation of pleasure and embarrassment, she recognized a breathing counterpart of the crayon hanging on her chamber wall.

As they lingered over the breakfast-table, Loise perceived that, as the first excitement of his return subsided, a strange lassitude of manner, unnatural to her brother, crept over him; and she then realized how thin was his flushed cheek, how fluctuating its color.

When she questioned if he was not ill, he admitted himself weary, and promised to lie down on the parlor sofa, if she would sit beside him.

"Do you remember, Loise," he asked, as she adjusted a cushion beneath his head, and Dorrance Sullivan sat in the recess of the window a little way off, "how, years ago, one sad summer morning, I found you weeping by yon empty chair? I soothed your childish grief, and, worn out, you sank asleep in my arms. The sweet picture you then presented has haunted me since; and now, darling, I am going to Italy to seek amid the conceptions of the old masters as divine a portraiture of childish beauty. I once sketched you from memory; and, rudely drawn as my sketch was, it has often found admirers. There were many who came to my room to look at it; but Dorrance chose that we alone should gaze upon its lovely lineaments, and he veiled it, saying idle eyes should not profane with their gaze our angel child. Through his brotherly love for me, he claims you also, Loise; and

God grant you a guardian as strong and true as you will find in him. Through many dangers he has guided me — from much temptation he has shielded me. But for him, Loise, I believe I had gone down when the sun shone brightest ; for I am weak where he is strong. But the strength which has been denied me has been given him to fight life's battles. I cannot wrestle with destiny. May you, darling, be stronger than I ! You have changed of late, my little Loise. I can behold, as I look into these earnest eyes of yours, woman's love (that beautiful ebullition of a true heart, that is so precious to man) stirring within you, and it bids me seek a woman's sympathy in you. The student's weary hours are repaid, Loise ; the prize for which he toiled by day and night, until his brain grew wild, and his strength left him, is at length his own. Not until I was flushed with victory had I courage to ask Annie Duncan's love ; and it is mine, mine own forever, now, Loise. I am going to Italy ; when I return you will have a sister — I a wife."

Once or twice, as Edward spoke, she had glanced toward their guest ; but his eyes were bent upon his book, and her brother's voice was too low for him to overhear their conversation. She little dreamed of the vision which lay between himself and the words before him, — a vision that sent a new-born thrill of pleasure through that grave, still heart.

For a while after Edward ceased speaking he lay in deep thought, his glance fixed on vacancy ; then the lashes, long and thick as woman's, fell over the flushed cheeks, and he slept.

By the window sat Dorrance Sullivan, his head slightly drooped upon his chest, his attitude indicating repose, but with a latent power in the compressed lips, and grave, almost stern face, contrasting vividly with the exquisite yet not wholly feminine beauty of the sleeper. One was the impersonation of the dreaming artist, a worshipper of the beautiful, born for sunshine and love ; the other, the embodiment of

strong, athletic manhood, fitted to breast adversity's bitterest blast.

A vague uneasiness filled Loise's heart as she watched her brother's uneasy sleep, and her hand burnt within his clasp.

Long she watched him, in her earnestness forgetful of the presence of their guest, until, looking up, she beheld him standing by her side, and regarding Edward with the same troubled expression which had marked her own countenance. Just then the sleeper's forehead contracted as in pain, his eyes unclosed, and fixed with a peculiar expression on Loise ; and he called her Annie, — he knew her not !

Again the shadow of death floated over Woodland ; but now it was youth, not age, that was smitten to sudden helplessness. The brilliant intellect was dethroned, and for many days the student lay upon his couch murmuring of his bright hopes and his love, utterly unconscious of all that was passing around him. The strong arm of Dorrance Sullivan held him powerless in its control when the fever madness was on him. The gentle hand of Loise bathed his burning head, and soothed him to rest. It was beautiful as sad to perceive how the vision of Annie Duncan haunted his spirit ; and to learn, in the revelation of his unconscious words, how far beyond his strength he had toiled to stand high in those loved eyes.

But days of hope and happiness lay yet in the sufferer's future. Bright days of hopeful convalescence followed those of delirium.

And they who had ministered to him in illness grew daily more conscious of the birth of a wide sympathy between their own hearts. Now, as Loise listened to her brother's hopes, she too thought how beautiful it was to be loved as Edward loved Annie Duncan. She questioned herself, could there be another on earth like it ; and Reason answered her, there was a holier love than his, — a love in which there was nothing of

idolatrous worship, but an eternity of faith,—and her glance wandered to Dorrance Sullivan.

The day on which Edward Crayton and his friend were to leave Woodland was drawing rapidly near. Edward was going abroad. A southern residence had now become imperative for the invalid's impaired health.

Not yet had Dorrance Sullivan spoken of love to Loise Crayton, but a blessed conviction of the truth lay warm and peaceful at her heart.

The day preceding that on which the friends were to depart, Dorrance Sullivan and Loise Crayton were walking in the beautiful strip of wood-land which bordered the grounds of Loise's home. The path lay partly through the trees edging the bank of a little rivulet, the murmuring of whose waters mingled with the whisper of the wind amid the trees. She had taken off her hat in the shadow of the forest, and a crimson flower, which he had gathered, was wound amid the waves of her hair. But the flower was not more bright in its blushing beauty than the glow which stole over her cheek.

"Loise," he said, "to-morrow I shall leave Woodland; with you it rests to decide if it be forever. Will it be asking too much if I request you not to permit time to rob me of all hold on your memory?"

There was a brief silence as the girl turned away her face, and he continued, "Will you think of me, Loise, as something more than a friend?"

There was a slight tremor perceptible in that manly voice, and womanly love rose superior to girlish diffidence.

"Yes, Dorrance," she answered, timidly, raising her clear eyes to his, as she held forth her hand. He took it tenderly, almost reverently, and drew it within his arm.

"I will not bind you, Loise," he said, "in your extreme youth, to any rash promise. I would only thank you for the words which shall cheer me, give me hope and strength, through future years. I shall go home a richer man than I

ever dreamed of being when I came down to Woodland ; for the memory of this hour is given me, and no sorrow or change can take it from me. A richer man, though I have not deemed myself a poor one. Although without worldly wealth, well-nigh penniless, burdened heavily in life's very onset by a great duty towards the helpless and dependent, — not poor, Loise, for my Creator has not smitten me with poverty of heart. I have longed, Loise, for gold ; I have craved it as a hungry man craves bread, when suffering has called on me for charity and I have had naught to give ; but now I question myself, 'Have you not reason and ordinary intelligence ?' and a voice answers, 'You are not wanting ; go forth, — enter fearlessly the arena of life, and achieve fortune unaided, that it may be a blessing, not a burden.' There are those who might hesitate to address you, Loise, — you, the child of wealth ; but, all penniless as I am, I view the subject far differently. The human heart woos the human heart. I offer you a love as deep and holy as ever man bore to woman ; — no sudden outbreak of passion, no new-born affection ; as I have loved the child-sister of Edward Crayton, only with a deeper affection do I now regard you."

There was nothing of arrogance in his manner ; he spoke with the frank dignity of honorable manhood, and with child-like confidence the girl listened, reverencing him when he ceased. The crimson flower woven in her hair was placed on the crayon's moss-frame, as the only fitting shrine for the relic of that hour, — the flower which had been consecrated by the benediction of his affection.

"It is not well to love as Edward loves," she had whispered to herself. "It is not well." But brother and sister were alike. Loise loved Dorrance with a love no less fervent than Edward Crayton's for Annie Duncan.

CHAPTER III.

“ Woe for those who trample o’er a mind ! —
A deathless thing ! They know not what they do,
Or what they deal with. Man perchance may bind
The flower his touch has bruised, may light anew
The torch he quenched.

But for the soul ! — O, tremble and beware
To lay rude hands upon God’s mysteries *there !* ”

More than two years have sped since the departure of Edward Crayton from Woodland Cottage. The cottage is now closed and desolate ; no longer gay voice or melodious song echoes the music of forest bird. The winter succeeding his departure, Loise joined her father in a gay city, on his return.

The first summer Loise had stolen away from the gayeties of her new home, to the old familiar spot where the crayon semblance of Dorrance Sullivan hung on the chamber walls ; but the second summer only the figure of the old housekeeper wandered from room to room. A shadow has fallen on the heart of Loise ; it grows ever darker and more palpable. It was the first cloud of life, and it rested heavily on the buoyant heart of girlhood.

Edward Crayton’s letters home were now filled with his ardent longing to return. A deep yearning had come upon him to look upon the loved ones once more. The eternal sunshine of the south was enervating him ; he wrote that he required the more bracing home atmosphere. A picture was glowing on his canvas, which needed but a few more touches.

The father’s cheek paled even while his lip smiled ; for he trembled lest it was the lassitude of deadly disease which oppressed his son, and awoke intense home yearnings in his breast.

The day of the wanderer’s return at length came, — a clear,

bright day in early December. The wind swept up with a fierce whisper from the ice-crusted bay ; but no inmate of the sumptuous residence of Mr. Crayton dreamed of winter winds, as they wandered through the thickly-carpeted chambers, meeting at every turn a sweeter breath from the rifled contents of green-house and conservatory, a brighter flood of sunshine mellowed in its passage through silken draperies. A long residence abroad had rendered the master of the house familiar with luxury ; and nothing that taste or comfort could devise was wanting there.

The air was heated to an unusual degree, and the flowers poured forth a richer incense. Everything that might cheat the senses into a belief that summer, not winter, was with them, had been devised for the coming of Edward Crayton.

His betrothed bride was in his father's house, in the full charm of her exceeding loveliness, to greet him on his arrival. But, like a restless spirit, Mr. Crayton wandered from room to room. Could it be excess of emotion in anticipation of the coming of that beloved son ? Was it but to hide his parental weakness that he would spring up restlessly from his chair, to issue some new orders, and glance around with that almost defiant scowl ? That again would cause an unwonted languor to bow his stately form, while his cheek would grow almost as white as the cambric handkerchief with which he wiped big drops of perspiration from his forehead.

All at once there stole upon his ear the music of a woman's voice. It was very melodious, but indescribably spirited and haughty. She was singing an air from some Italian opera, and the rich notes of a harp mingled with her voice. He raised his head, brushed back his dark hair, woven with many a silver thread, and advanced in the direction of the sounds. The carpet was too thick to betray his footstep, and the opening door gave no token of his presence.

It was a spacious room, with arched ceiling, and tall windows opening into the conservatory. You could see the

orange-tree laden with fruit, and the dark, glossy leaves of the myrtle, mingling with the snowy blossoms of a cape-jessamine, through the draping lace. The room was full of the perfume of flowers, and the wonted notes of the imprisoned birds in the conservatory were now hushed to listen.

A girl was bending over a harp, her graceful form and beautiful face mirrored in the glass before her; and it was upon that face Mr. Crayton fixed his gaze. Every feature was perfect. The complexion was dark, but clear, with a crimson glow on the cheek, and the rich lashes sweeping over eyes which it was dangerous to look upon in all their brilliancy. But the small head was set with a haughty grace on the full, voluptuous bust; and the curl of the red lip detracted something from its charm to the eye of the minute observer.

She was alone, but for the unknown presence of Mr. Crayton, and a beautiful greyhound sitting by her side, with its watchful eyes on her face. Suddenly she bent down, while the hand that swept the strings before her fell with a caressing gesture on the dog's head. It sprang into her lap with a low whine of joy, while she wound her arms about it, kissing it fondly as she would have caressed a human being. It had been Edward Crayton's gift; and the gazer's lip lost its indecision, there came to his face an expression of indomitable will. He closed the door, departing noiselessly as he had entered, and passed on to the drawing-room. That was the only room in the house not filled with sunshine, it being on the north side of the house, and closed and deserted, while the fierce winter wind beat hard against the outer wall. He placed his hand upon his heart, as though he would press down all tenderness rising there in entreaty for her who was to suffer; but he never once faltered, though he knew his errand to that dark, silent room was full of grief and sin. With folded arms, and resolute, compressed countenance, he sat watching the coming of her whom he had summoned to his

presence, that he might mar the beautiful creation of nature, — lay in ruins the altar on which his child had deposited the priceless treasure of her affections.

And she came, with a flood of sunshine from the outer room floating about her, as she paused on the threshold, looking in.

She had been sitting in her chamber, when he sent for her, before an open desk, with a closely-written letter upon it. Her arms were folded in dreary revery. The dark eyes had lost something of their old serenity; life was not to her the same gay dream of happiness which had been meted to her childhood. The beloved one was far off, toiling resolutely, but slowly, through all life's obstacles, for the attainment of a blessed future.

In Loise's heart there was a deep yearning for home affection, an eager longing to meet the daily glance of love. Friends and fortune smiled upon her, but the one boon she craved was denied. In her father's house another than herself was paramount. That she could have borne, had it not been for the knowledge that not one tenth part of the affection lavished on Edward was given her. Her father regarded her, as man often does woman, but as one who owed passive obedience to his will, — an obedience which his care for her material comfort should recompense.

But now, as Mr. Crayton bent down and kissed the cheek of her whom he drew to his side, there was an expression of intense joy and gratification visible on her face, as though the treasure which she had long coveted was at last obtained; though it soon gave way, as she listened to his words, to bewilderment and amaze.

As his meaning became more clear, and she began to comprehend the drift of his speech, she started up, wound her arms about him, and pleaded with him, in sad, passionate words, to cease. Then he put her back and turned away, pacing the apartment for a moment ere he again paused

before her. She did not look up, but shuddered and turned aside her head; and once more he spoke.

After a long time she arose and left his presence. The light step had lost its buoyancy; and the sunlight, as she stood again in the open hall, gleamed over a wan, white face. There was an unusual stir, and, by the murmur of eager voices, she knew that her brother had come; but she did not spring forward at once to greet him: she turned away and entered another room, that she might for a time avoid his presence. But he was there before her, his arm about his betrothed. They did not notice her; and, as Loise stood looking upon Edward Crayton, the wild expression settled down into a look of mournful resignation. His heavily-furred cloak was folded about him, so that one could not perceive how slight had become that form; but the emaciation of the cheek was perceptible even through its crimson flush, and a hard, ringing cough broke in upon his whispered words of joy when he folded her in his arms.

Yet he declared himself well, but for a slight cold taken during the voyage; and they were only too eager to believe him. The day past, the evening came, and in its gayeties Edward roused himself to exertion, holding his friends spell-bound by the magic of his happiness, as he hung over Annie Duncan; and Loise turned away from the beseeching eyes of her father fixed upon her despairingly, as though she alone had power to save. All day the letter lying on her desk had been suffered to remain untouched; but, as the evening wore on, she arose, and, going up to her room, placed it in the flame of the lamp. It burnt slowly, for it was thickly folded; and all the while the expression on her face grew more hopeless. Then she opened her desk, and took from thence a package of letters. Once she half-raised them to her lips, but checked herself, and hastily left the room. The wind sighed mournfully in its passage through the hall; but it was the dreary blast of despair sweeping through her heart that made

her shudder and tremble when she placed that little package in her father's hand. He folded her in his arms; he blessed her for her obedience; but the caress and the blessing were only a mockery to her then.

The warm firelight shed a ruddy glow over the group gathered in the cheerful parlor of Dorrance Sullivan's home, waiting his coming. It was a cold, stormy night; but the voice of his young sister, whiling away the interval with song and music, drowned the murmur of the wind. The tea-table was spread, and his boy-brother sat with wistful eyes bent upon the door, while scarce his mother's gentle voice could quell a more boisterous ebullition of joy. After a while there came an opening of the hall-door, then Dorrance's voice fell upon their ear, and all rose up eagerly to greet him. He came, his hair damp with the falling rain, but with beaming eye and smile-wreathed lips, pausing in the open door before them. Tidings had reached them, ere he came, of the subtle eloquence which had borne all before it when he opened his first case that day at the bar; and, triumphant as was his success, the attempt was one at which older heads than his own might have hesitated. And now, as he stood, in the bosom of his family, beside his widowed mother and the loved ones in whose care he should be her counsellor and support, years of past labor were nothing, — all was repaid. A calm, deep sense of happiness was his, a bright dream of the future, as his thoughts wandered to one yet dearer than all. With eyes dim with emotion, and throbbing heart, he passed on to the little study where he had toiled long for that day's success. The door closed upon him; the hour wore on, and he came not forth; his mother rose up and went in search of him. He heard her not, as she entered; he gazed upon her as on vacancy. The manly cheek was but little paler than its wont; but the light of those eyes was quenched in tears, though they were not suffered to roll over his cheek.

When he noticed the gentle face looking upon him, he brushed

together the scattered letters before him, looking up with a vain effort at a smile ; but the mother put her arm tenderly around him, saying, " If sorrow has laid its heavy hand upon you, open your heart to your mother, my son ; she will comfort you."

He bent his head, and kissed affectionately the hand that lay upon his arm, but said nothing — neither did he attempt to smile again, for he was sick at heart, sick almost unto death. The broad chest stirred more than once convulsively during the evening ; but he joined the family circle quietly, almost calmly, as was his wont.

But when the silent midnight came, and he was alone once more, his glance resting on his letters to Loise Crayton, all returned, with a brief, cold rejection of his love, then he laid his face upon the table before him, while hope and joy passed out from his heart, leaving him lone and desolate in his early manhood. The dream of years was at an end. Dorrance Sullivan, in the early day, folded the curtain over the sketch which Edward had given him, and which alone had witnessed his anguish ; and, girding up his strength for the contest between the past and the future, went forth into the world to fulfil the part allotted to him on earth, though the sun-light had been forever stricken from his path. No human being might ever know the sudden bursts of anguish which swept over his heart whenever that veil was withdrawn, and he looked upon that picture. The memory of Loise he strove to cherish as that of one who had been lost in youth's purity ; he mourned over the once guileless spirit, debased by the world's contact. But he became not bitter against that world ; he was no lone misanthropist ; rather he sought to enlighten society, to purify and refine it, that other hearts might not be wrecked like his own. He silenced the voice of the tempter, which bade him revile his fellow-beings for the perfidy of one, and met sorrow with the resignation of a Christian, the courage of a brave and honorable man.

CHAPTER IV.

“ On thy parted lips there ’s a quivering thrill,
As on a lyre ere its chords are still ! ”

“ Woe ! for the wealth so dearly bought ! ”

There was a magnificent temple thrown open to a brilliant crowd ; — a flashing of jewels ; a rustling of silken robes ; a deep, thrilling gush of music, swelling upwards to the vaulted ceiling, and filling each pillared recess with its rich melody, as a bridal party swept up the stately aisle, and knelt before the altar consecrated to the Almighty, but which they were, that dark winter night, to desecrate by the sacrifice of youth to age, — to barter the pure, fresh heart of girlhood, for the old man’s gold. But with passive resignation stood erect the graceful figure, its symmetrical proportions discernible through the sweeping folds of lace and satin, and the bride’s cheek blushed not beneath her costly veil ; eye, lip and cheek, were statuesque in their expression, until the words were spoken which gave her to the man by her side. Then over her face there flitted a deep, hot glow, an expression of bitter self-scorn ; and she trembled and pressed her hand on her throbbing heart, striving vainly for that forgetfulness which came not at her bidding. And to the echoing music the mocking pageant swept on, amid congratulations and beaming smiles ; for bright, genial spring was wedded to cold, austere winter.

Days, weeks passed by, and the bride sat in the gorgeous loneliness of her new home, weeping not over lost happiness, — for tears and repinings were not for her, — but striving to silence the never-ceasing voice of memory, speaking of the past, while she coldly, calmly, received the adulation of society.

The beautiful residence which had become her home was in the suburbs of the city, and her carriage might be seen, in the sunniest hours of the day, driving rapidly through its streets ; and at times, although rarely, an elderly gentleman

sat by her side, with silvery hair, but of erect and somewhat stately presence; and always, when he accompanied his young wife, his blue eyes beamed with gentle tenderness upon her, and he bore with her coldness as a father with a wayward child. But she often strove to cast aside, in his presence, the dark shadow which appeared to have wrapped itself close about her, chilling her with its gloom.

Many a wondering, questioning glance followed Mr. Manson and the beautiful young creature he had won to be his wife; but only that silent drawing-room, the torturer and the tortured who had sat therein, knew that it was to replace, for the father's idol, the wealth that was gone in mad speculations, that she had yielded herself as the sacrifice.

But when he accompanied her home, he never entered with her the beautiful octagon room appropriated to Edward, who worked hard, day after day, on the lovely picture, which was robbing even Annie Duncan, in a measure, of his attention; but it was his wont to join Mr. Crayton in the library when Loise sought her brother's studio with an evident desire to shun his companionship.

One morning Annie Duncan and Loise sat therein in earnest conversation; but the glance of the sister rested upon her brother. The marked alteration apparent in him had struck her with vivid forcibleness; and when, with sudden weariness, he leant back in his chair with closed eyes, she would have approached him, but the words which Annie Duncan was speaking arrested her attention.

"It is a novel and silly fancy which has taken possession of our friend, Miss Maynard. I cannot understand how one used, as she has been, to luxury, can thus court poverty in marrying her penniless lover."

"Do you not think, Annie, that you would make a like sacrifice, were you called upon?"

She forgot Edward; there was a wild earnestness in her glance. A terror came over her, lest Annie Duncan should

reply in the affirmative, and the sacrifice which she had made appear of less value to him; and when the girl shook her head almost scornfully, answering "never," she breathed a low, faint sigh of relief, and once more turned her attention to Edward; but he was bowed over his easel, his countenance hid.

After that morning there was more resignation in the glance of Loise; there was yet a joy for her in the joy of others.

At length, one clear, bracing morning, late in February, when the wind swept hoarsely up the icy streets, folding her furred mantle very close about her, Loise passed up the broad marble steps, and entered her father's house. Her step was slow, her cheek pale. She had been asking herself, could not the smile of happiness on her brother's lip, the deeper glow of beauty on the face of Annie Duncan, when he spoke of the bridal close at hand, reconcile and strengthen her to bear patiently the burden which, for their sake, she had accepted; but the memory of a broken faith whispered, "Never!"

That day, when her father met her with a cordial welcome, for which she once would have blessed him, she trembled and shrank aside, as a meteor-like thought swept through her brain. Although she bade it depart, again it flashed bitter and poignant athwart her when she paused on the threshold of Edward's studio, and looked upon the radiant face of his betrothed. Sorrow and care had forborne to trace one line on those fair features; life to her was bright as the sunshine falling over her as she read. All around was peace and gladness,—Loise alone stricken and sad. What wonder, then, that the vague floating thought shaped itself in the soul of that life-weary one into a stern, dark query, Why am I thus unhappy? why laden so heavily? "Annie, Annie!" she whispered to herself, "have you not sinned even as I?—where is Heaven's justice?"

The dark eyes were filled with a strange, defiant expression, the red lips tightly compressed, at the dark, atheistical questioning. But neither mortal voice nor her own conscience was to answer her: only the white face, that lay so still and quiet, pillowed on the crimson cushions of the chair, and the golden light falling over the canvas before him, warring with its warmth and brightness against the cold shadow of Death.

And Loise gazed not on the angelic face of the child resting on the boy's shoulder, the little figure nestling to his bosom; but on the thin, white face, with its drooping lids and parted lips, while the glow of passion faded, the wild look changed to an expression of silent, hopeless grief.

There was something in the hushed breath, the perfect silence, that attracted the attention of Annie Duncan. She looked up from her book, glancing towards Edward. He slept. Then her eye wandered to the little, rigid figure standing in the doorway; she, too, was looking that way with a strange expression. Then she arose, and went to him; with a slight pallor of the cheek, she laid her hand upon his shoulder.

"Edward! Edward!" she said, in a sharp, frightened voice. Then there came a cry of bitter fear and agony, and Annie Duncan sank down slowly, shudderingly, upon the carpet, like one bereft of life. But the mute watcher sprang to his side, and, winding her arms about him, kissed him passionately, murmuring, all the while, "God pardon me, — I knew not what I said!"

But no imploring prayer, no grief, however wild, could wake him more, — the dreaming artist slept the pulseless sleep of death!

The last touch had been given the beautiful painting before him — the last poetical conception had been transferred to the canvas. In the glorious sunshine, and in the presence of Annie Duncan, with the same serene smile on his lip which

he had worn in life, Edward Crayton went home to his Father in heaven ; and the sacrifice which had been offered was valueless — as like sacrifices ever have been, and ever will be.

Not only the death of her brother answered Loise, when, in the wild rebellion of the moment, religion took wing and her soul grew dark within her, but the remorse-stricken glance of the father, when he turned from the dead ; and his child shrank shivering from his presence.

And Loise knew also that she had sinned, when love of earthly ones had won her to become faithless in God's eyes. She had failed to remember the precept, Do not evil that good may come of it ; and although her own heart bled at the sacrifice, it extenuated not sin in uttering false vows at God's altar. Upas-like, the one sin poisoned all else.

With Annie Duncan she wept over her brother's death, while no bitterness mingled in her tears for the dead. Bereavement we can endure, though it leave us lone and desolate on earth. Heaven-sent trials soften and humble our spirits only when the human heart creates its own misery, and we realize that we have in a measure made our own woe.

Loise Manson's task was to expiate where she had erred. Most grievously had she sinned when she hearkened to the voice that tempted her, — for, though it was a father's voice, another yet more imperative was whispering her — the voice of conscience, — most grievously, when she gave herself to another, with the memory of Dorrance Sullivan lingering in her heart ; and grievously must the erring atone.

There was a fierce, long struggle, in the young wife's bosom, between all the natural goodness of her heart and the dark spirit roused into being. The gentle emotions of the past might have triumphed ; but once, only once (and Loise Manson craved of fate the one boon that it might not again occur) she again met Dorrance Sullivan. It was years after her brother's death, and there were many present. Time had

wrought little change in the girlish face and form ; there was only a line of care about the sweet mouth, a slight drooping of the lids over the soft eyes, as though an habitual weariness oppressed her.

But that night her cheek was paler than its wont, and the little jewelled hand resting upon her husband's arm was cold with emotion ; for she knew that he was present, and that the crowd alone hid him from her view.

There was a murmuring of gay voices, soft laughter, and music was swelling through the lighted rooms with a long-continued burst of melody ; but she heeded it not, for he was standing before her. One step she advanced ; the words "Pardon me, Dorrance ; I wronged you not wilfully," trembled on her lip ; but his eyes wandered from her, where they had rested with the softened glance of other days, to the old man by her side, and back again, not to the agitated face, but to the costly folds of her robe sweeping almost to his side, with a glance of calm rebuke.

There was nothing bitter or ironical in the glance of Dorrance Sullivan ; but the cheek so lately pallid with emotion flushed to the deepest crimson, and she passed onward, more bitterly humbled and rebuked than had all the many present scorned her whom they greeted with flattering words and smiles ; for Loise was the beautiful wife of the rich old man, and the sacrifice which honor and goodness condemn society welcomed with its luring smile.

Fashion made her its idol, and worshipped her. Once more smiles wreathed her lip, and her eyes lost their sadness. But the smile was not like that of other days ; it contrasted strangely with the deep-woven line of care about the beautiful mouth. It was fleeting and evanescent, lingering only in the gay saloon, leaving her lip cold, her young face gloomy, when there was none but her husband present in their lone home.

She shunned that solitude which she had once loved, that the gay voice of the crowd might drown the low pleadings of

conscience, wooing her to forgetfulness of the serpent pride stinging her into unrest. Even in the old man's presence she had become petulant; but he bore with her gently, as he would have borne with a wayward child, for he had long known that it was his gold that won her to become his wife, and he upbraided himself for the part which he had taken.

But there was one lone and desolate in his luxurious home, where the low, sobbing voice that had answered him years before in that shadowy drawing-room was ever echoing on his ear; and rarely he looked on the beautiful painting which his dead son had left without burying his face in his hands, while tears stole through his clasped fingers, falling like rain upon the carpet.

But it was not the memory of the dead painter that wrung from the father's heart those falling tears; but the contrast between the pure, angelic face on the canvas, and that of the cold, beautiful woman of the world, so like, even with the shadow of ill-spent years now seen on her brow.

But the rough sketch of that beautiful painting, which hangs on the wall of Dorrance Sullivan's study, finds no gazer; for the veil has never once been lifted since the jewel-decked wife of Edward Manson swept up that stately saloon, while a silvery laugh broke from the lips which were seemingly mocking the faith that was broken.

CHAPTER V.

“ But calm thee ! let the thought of death
A solemn calm restore !
The voice that must be silent soon
Would speak to thee once more.”

It was a glorious summer's night, with a clear, starry sky, and whispering breeze, silent, but for the city's voice, low murmuring in the distance, and the whip-poor-will's plaintive

note mingling with the night-hawk's screech in the woods skirting the broad grounds of the Mansons.

But lights were flitting to and fro through the house, as the servants, in their fear and excitement, wandered from room to room. Then the silence was broken by the roll of wheels and the tramping of horses, as a carriage drove up to the hall-door, while a woman sprang out, never waiting, as was her wont, for the tall footman behind.

One bound up the marble steps, and the light from the hall-lamp fell upon a graceful figure, with floating draperies of costly lace and glistening satin, jewels woven in the dark hair braided above a white brow, and whiter cheek and lip; for the ashen hue of fear and dread was there.

With a step tremulous, but hurried, so unlike her usual haughty bearing that all drew back in pity, she passed through the hall, up the broad stairway, into the chamber where the old man was wrestling with his gigantic antagonist, Death; who, with sure, stern hand, was rending, one by one, the links which bound him to earth. Summoned from the festive hall, where the dance was gay, the music loud, to the couch of the dying, stood Loise, the young wife, looking down upon her partner, awe-stricken, utterly subdued. The silver hair, damp with suffering, lay in moistened masses upon the pillow, and the pale face was cold and still as marble. A slight, restless motion stirred the silken counterpane, and it fell in long crimson billows over the late erect and vigorous old man, sinking into dreamless rest.

"Loise," he said, in faint and broken accents, "God bless and protect you! Pardon me, Loise, and forget me!" And as he spoke she bowed her head upon the pillow, and wept.

When she once more looked up she was free; the bond was broken,—the bond by her so hated. But the joyous sense of freedom came not upon her there; not when she laid her hand upon the pulseless one by her side, and shivered at

its contact, with that strange, mysterious awe the living ever experience in the presence of death.

“Edward!” she said, sorrowfully and slowly, bending down and touching, for the first time, without remorse, those pallid lips, — for now it was no false caress. All his gentleness and forbearance with her own coldness and waywardness came over her; and, loving him in death as she could not in life, she turned away sorrowing and repentant.

But when the deep gloom of midnight gave way to the dim shadows and first gray light of early day, — when all was silent, and all slept, but the widowed one, — she was pacing to and fro her chamber with rapid steps, while the breath came quicker to her lip, and the delicate cheek glowed and burned, as wild thoughts swept, phantom-like, through her brain. The jewels of her yesterday’s toilet were strewn upon the dressing-table, the costly gems flashing in the lamp-light.

“Mine, all mine!” she whispered, as she paused beside them. “Mine, all mine!” she repeated, as she gathered back the curtain and gazed from the casement, while a smile of radiant exultation flitted over the beautiful face. “And thou, thou, Dorrance, thine again!” while, faint with emotion, as she gave utterance to the passionate hope, she leaned far out, and looked down into the valley beneath.

A silver mist lay on the hills, and floated over the blue waters of the lake; the birds twittered in the woods, and the flowers nodded sleepily beneath their coronets of sparkling dew. There was a freshness, a purity, in that early morning hour, which subdued the wild, passionate heart of that young creature, always so susceptible to the loveliness of nature. The glow faded from her cheek, the feverish light from her eye; she bowed her head upon the sill of the open window, and wept. All the soft, sweet emotions of her early girlhood came over her; she ceased to remember, but as a troubled dream, the years which had intervened since she had knelt in earnest prayer beside the low couch in her cottage chamber,

where the crayon's moss-frame gleamed out in the moonlight from the wall. Again she was a joyous girl, with Dorrance Sullivan by her side ; radiant with bright hopes, gazing upon her flower-woven hair, mirrored in the little stream before her, while his hand yet lingered amid the white lilies and crimson buds which he had braided there. Then followed the memory of her subsequent grief, when the storm-clouds gathered, and broke at last, deluging her whole existence with the bitter waters of hopeless despair, while all that was bright and fair in her heart withered and shrunk away in a passion of wild pride and stormy rebellion against her destiny, — a destiny which she had herself, in a measure, made.

But now the tempest was over, the sunshine came out radiant from the departing clouds, and not even the shadow of death which lay on the young wife's heart could veil its hopefulness. Vain and futile were all efforts to forget the crayon on the chamber wall ; it smiled upon her even when she would have wept for the old man's death, and in her secret exultation there mingled a scorn of her own heart. She had warred, in her pride, against her better nature ; and, although now, as the dark cross vanished, much of her early faith came back, the shadow of the past still lay on the present, and might never wholly fade. Once she had erred. Memory was faithful to the past ; it would ever recall it, — vain, utterly vain was it to seek to forget it.

She was more beautiful in her matured loveliness than when she first blushed beneath Dorrance Sullivan's glance. Yet although stately home, broad lands, and princely wealth, were now her own, the shadow of sin lay upon the heart of womanhood, and veiled even her deep, unchanging love for himself. Will he seek her now ? Long afterwards the question which hope put to love was answered, but not in words. Loise herself read what no tongue ever framed into words when she first met the beloved of her girlhood.

With a voice sweet and low as ever greeted him at Wood-

land Cottage, and as sincere in its affection, she told him how terrible had been her sacrifice ; and he thanked her for that frankness which robbed the memory of her youth of all bitterness, when he learnt that not lightly had he been rejected, but he spoke of Loise Crayton as of one between whom and the widow of Edward Manson there existed no connection.

He forgave her his past hours of sorrow and loneliness, and again turned calmly back to life and its duties.

Once more Woodland Cottage was inhabited ; but its beautiful mistress sought not its solitude to mourn over the desolation of her life. The long lingering spirit of rebellious pride had passed out from her breast when she stood in the noble, benignant presence of Dorrance Sullivan, and, forgiving, he blessed her. She strove to strengthen her heart to its duty. Sorrowing alone over her own weakness, once more she knelt beside the low couch in her cottage chamber, while peace came back to her restless soul, hope to her desolate breast—no hope of earthly joy, but that which the Father of mercies, watching over his penitent child, would reward. The wealth, so dearly earned, was lavished on the destitute and the suffering, the echo of whose prayers fell with hallowed import on the ear of Dorrance Sullivan ; and he would smile on the angel face of the child in the sketch, and count another link woven between himself and the spirit parted from him only on earth.

And still the smile on the crayon's lip gleams sunnily over the darkest hour of Loise Manson's life.

LIGHT IN DARKNESS.

No light — a glory filled the room ;
No light — I saw a roseate bloom ;
And angels heard my voiceless prayer
That the sweet glow might linger there.

I knew two hearts beat side by side
Amid those shades of even-tide ;
That the soft glance I found upraised
Had not been lifted for my gaze.

I knew that tress of waving hair,
Gathered away with sudden care,
Had been unloosed by love's own hand
From the smooth foldings of its band.

As my faint tread the silence stirred,
In low, half-whispered tones, I heard :
“ We have no light, and night is near.”
But I found light serene and clear.

ANNIE RUTLIDGE;

OR, REMINISCENCES OF A PIANO.

“Breathe of deep love — a lonely vigil keeping,
Through the night hours, o’er wasted health to pine;
Rich thoughts and sad, like faded rose-leaves heaping,
In the shut heart at once a tomb and shrine.”

I HAVE a story, dear reader, of mingled joy and sorrow, to relate to you; and if it come not to your ear in musical language, judge not too critically, I beseech thee, my amanuensis.

Full well I remember the day, although many years have since intervened, when I was first unclosed in the drawing-room of Mr. Hugh Rutlidge, in the city of New York. Until that period, with a number of other pianos, I had inhabited a music saloon on Broadway; where I was the acknowledged beauty of all pianodom, whom the white fingers of young lady visitors loved to caress, and gray-haired professors of music lingered near. But, at last, one bright autumn morning, as Ruth Chivis, one of the most beautiful girls in the city, and then at the height of her belledom, sat before me, winning me from my silence to discourse to her in rich bursts of music, while the group of admirers hanging around her murmured their praise, I suddenly felt the jewelled fingers tremble and grow cold, while the color on the cheek of the lovely brunette deepened to a crimson glow, as the voice of Hugh Rutlidge fell upon her ear. Yet, though she trembled and blushed with such wild agitation at first, the succeeding

moment she arose with quiet hauteur, while no gleam of passion in the woman's eyes spoke of the lightning-like flash of love and anguish; and the voice which answered the gentleman's courteous greeting trembled not, although struggling through its coldness was a tone of sadness contrasting mournfully with the light words on her lip.

She smiled brightly, chatted gayly, and more than once she laughed a joyous, merry laugh; but, for all that, there stole an occasional dimness over the eyes which neither shunned nor drooped beneath his glance, and there was a hollow and constrained note in the silvery laugh perceptible to himself alone. But with words of cold reason he silenced the voice of all that was honorable or generous, pleading in his breast for the young creature over whose glad spirit of youth he had cast the dark mantle of sorrow. There was a thrill at his heart when Ruth Chivis was present — a thrill of delicious emotion when the graceful figure raised itself haughtily erect by his side; for imprisoned affection for him looked out through all the blended pride and scorn of those eyes. Sweet to the innate selfishness of the man's being was the conviction that she whom he loved loved on in despite of despair and shame, while he left her for the young heiress for whose coming even then he was preparing. His betrothed was an amateur in music; and this very morning on which he met Ruth Chivis in the music saloon, he was in quest of a superior instrument for her use. There were few who played or sang with greater skill than Ruth Chivis; but when the group clustered around proposed that she should try my powers for Hugh Rutlidge, then for the first time his cheek flushed, and he turned aside in evident embarrassment. A brilliant prelude, and the voice which mingled its music with my notes recalled him. Never richer tones rang out on listener's ear than on Hugh Rutlidge's, as, fascinated, he stood powerless to turn aside from the eloquent eyes fixed on his, gathering, as it were, inspiration in the triumph of the moment, as she won him back to an adoring glance, but to scorn the homage she won.

"Will it answer Mrs. Hugh Rutlidge?" she questioned, ere the echo of the music had ceased to reverberate through the saloon, in a voice very calm, and with a glance so tranquil that his brow clouded; for, in the utter selfishness of his heart, he could not bear to look upon her thus unmoved.

And now he who had deceived was duped in return; for I alone beheld the slight convulsion passing over the beautiful face, as she turned away her head, that no eye might look upon her. O, beautiful and worshipped, but unhappy one, with no gold to buy thee faith, how I longed to murmur a soft note of sympathy! How I shuddered and wailed beneath the hand of Hugh Rutlidge, when in gloomy thought he sank down by my side when thou wert gone; and I knew that the memory of you was with him when he ordered me sent to the home which was to receive his future wife!

I had been there many days, in hourly expectation of the coming of Mrs. Rutlidge, when, one morning, Pompey, a tall servant in livery, came into the drawing-room where I was installed in a pillared alcove, and, lifting the cover of embossed velvet falling about me in costly folds, prepared me for the appearance of his mistress. Always afterward, from that morning hour usually until near midnight, that luxurious drawing-room was open to my observation, as well as the exquisite boudoir facing me.

Nearly an hour intervened between the appearance of Pompey and the entrance of Mrs. Hugh Rutlidge, while, in the interval, I beheld the carpet with gay-hued flowers, rose-wood couches, and costly draperies of silk and lace. Beautiful paintings looked down from rich frames on rare statuary; but the shadowy light of the room, its silence, its absence of all life and sunshine, chilled me. I loved the bright sunlight, and longed to behold all around me flooded with its warmth and beauty. In the whole house I heard no human voice ringing out soft tones, notes of light-hearted gladness.

Presently a little, graceful figure stood on the threshold of

the door, looking in. I did not notice the gentleman by its side; I was glancing at the fair white face, with a faint, rose-like glow on the cheek, the great dark eyes full of sunshine.

"It is a pretty place, but too dark and cold to sing in, Hugh," she said, in a sweet, girlish voice, looking up with a loving smile to the handsome face of Hugh Rutlidge. He patted, with a caressing gesture, the fair cheek, and called her some musical Italian love-name. She blushed girlishly, and drooped her long lashes, while he led her to the music-stool, sat down by her side, and murmured something about its being "time to forget childish ways, girlish manners." She looked up troubled and timid; but his smile reassured her. Suddenly my heart throbbed and thrilled joyously; for a soft hand caressed me, and I echoed back the lute-like voice floating, in the sweetest cadences of life and hope, into song.

And, all the while his wife sang, Hugh Rutlidge sat with his face bowed down upon his clasped hands, apparently drinking in the music of her voice, but in reality deaf to all but memory's promptings, recalling the hour when last he sat beside me, and another's melted on his ear.

"God help thee, young wife," I whispered to myself, "if thus early wander his thoughts from thee!"

After a while, together they arose and went out.

Towards noon the rooms began to fill with company, for the bride was at home that day. There were many earnest, curious glances bent upon her, for she was almost a stranger to all present; and at length, just as she was growing nervous and embarrassed under the attention which she attracted, Dr. Chivis and his daughter were announced.

There was a momentary hush as on her father's arm Ruth Chivis passed up that crowded drawing-room, and was presented to Mrs. Hugh Rutlidge. She was looking very ill; and I learned, from the whispers around, that she had been sick, sick almost unto death, since I had last beheld her. But

there was no sadness in the dark eyes, which had grown brighter, darker than of old ; and the voice which welcomed the shy young thing clinging to her husband's arm was sweet, almost tender, in its accents. Neither was there any negligence in her toilet, as though life were dark or dreary ; it was just as studiously graceful and attractive, her smile as soft, her words as gay ; and from that hour the world ceased to wound her by its suspicions, to whisper maliciously of her disappointment, when they marked her in the presence of Hugh Rutledge's bride.

She staid but a little while amidst them, for she frankly confessed herself not perfectly recovered from her late illness ; and her host himself led her to the door. I could see that she was paler than when she entered ; and, as she passed me, I saw that her lips were compressed as in pain.

"Shall I sing to you, Hugh ? You look sad and weary." They had all gone, and the wife was looking tenderly towards her husband, glad once more to be alone with him.

But he answered her, almost petulantly, "No ; his head ached, he was weary, he would rest."

Well was it for her happiness that the knowledge which was mine was denied to her ; well that she could never know that it was the memory of the forsaken one's touch which had consecrated me to him, leaving him loth to listen to music then !

Day after day she came to me in the drawing-room, but Hugh seldom accompanied her. After a while I fancied there was a more subdued expression on the face of the wife, and then Hugh came no more.

Perhaps it was the presence of a winter of extreme severity that chilled the sunny daughter of the south ; a slight feeling of home-sickness, as the weeks wore away, and the memory of her desolate childhood's home came back to her when the first bewildering excitement of her bridal passed ;

but, whatever it might have been, it had cast a shadow over the light heart.

Often she came in when she had been away of an evening ; and then she would linger long and restlessly in the drawing-room, waiting her husband's coming. At first, when he found her there, she would greet him so tenderly and lovingly, that the angry light faded from his eye, the expression of annoyance from his countenance ; but when it was repeated, night after night, he grew impatient.

At last, one cold winter night, just as the clock struck eleven, I heard the carriage as it drew up, and her voice in the hall questioning the servant whether Mr. Rutledge had yet returned. When he answered in the negative, she came in. I know it was a cold night, for I could hear the wind murmuring hoarsely without, though it was warm as midsummer within.

She went up close to the marble hearth, and stood before the huge grate with its glowing bed of anthracite, and held out her hands shudderingly ; for she was chilled even through the warm opera-cloak, with its furred lining. For a while she stood there, huddling her white arms in its folds, looking very weary, as though she had scarce strength to stand ; the long, trailing robe of snowy satin wavering as its costly folds swept the marble of the hearth.

As the hour wore on, she went over to the window looking down on the street, and, gathering back the curtain, gazed out on the deserted pave. Then she wheeled a large arm-chair to the hearth, and sat down, looking into the fire. In spite of herself her eyelids drooped ; then, to rouse herself, she began to sing a beautiful negro melody, which she had caught of the old negress who had been her nurse, and made her her idol ; and tears stole out as she sang, and lay damp on her cheek, with the memory of home at her heart. But, as the song died away, again the lashes drooped lower and lower, and she slept. At first her slumbers were restless ; but, after a while,

she slept the soft, quiet sleep of innocent girlhood, and I knew, by the smile on her lip shedding its radiance over her face, that the slumber that wrapped that night the senses of Annie Rutledge was full of sunshine.

The warm fire-light fell over her, while, falling back, her cloak displayed the delicate bust and uncovered arms, with the rich evening dress which she wore. Her head rested on the cushions of the chair, while the long, waving curls of brown hair swept back from the cheek, where her bright dreams of childhood and home had awakened a glow of beauty, though the drooping lashes were yet glittering with tears.

The murmur of voices, the rolling of carriages in the street, had ceased; — all was silent, the sleeper's low breathing alone audible; and still he came not. The fire had burned low, the light was nearly extinguished, when the outer door opened, and a heavy step passed through the hall. Pausing before the half-open door of the drawing-room, the master of the house looked in, and his cheek was flushed with wine. When he caught a glimpse of the white drapery in the chair before the fire, he came forward. He did not pause when he beheld the sweet young face before him, but laid his hand upon her, and shook her roughly.

“Why are you here again, Annie?” he said, angrily.

“You! ah, is it you, dear Hugh?” She did not notice his roughness, in her bewilderment. “How you frightened me! see how I tremble!” she continued, with a faint smile, putting her frail arm in his.

But he drew back from its touch, with a hoarse word on his lip, which she did not understand, but which sounded very like a smothered oath. But only too plainly she comprehended the rejection of the loving caress with which she would have greeted him, and drew back with a stifled sob on her lip, looking upon him with a sad, frightened gaze. And thus, for a moment, they stood eying each other; he dark

and stern, she sad and wondering. Then she took up her cloak, and, folding it about her neck with a slight shudder, together they went out.

The next morning, at a late hour, Hugh Rutlidge entered the drawing-room in his dressing-gown. He was alone ; and, taking up the morning paper, he sat down before the fire, and began to read. There was a slight pallor on his cheek, and his eyes were heavy with the dissipation of the previous night ; he pressed his hand to his forehead, as though it pained him ; and just then Annie entered. She had a large shawl folded about her, and her cheek was very white. He did not notice her ; but, as she stood watching him, again he pressed his hand upon his head, and she went up to him, and wound her arm about his neck before he was aware of her presence.

“ Are you ill, Annie ? ” he asked, looking up with something of his old gentleness of manner.

She tried to answer him cheerfully ; but her voice was hoarse and indistinct, and, notwithstanding her efforts, died away into a painful whisper. She had taken cold from her long night-watch in that very room ; and, knowing it was that which had made her ill, a pang of remorse for his unkindness came over him. He whispered a loving word in her ear, drew her to his knee, and laid her head upon his bosom, caressingly, as one would a sick child. She strove to force back the tears gushing to her eyes ; but the effort was vain, and she wept and sobbed in childish abandonment.

What wonder, then, that all her confidence in him came back, when he soothed her tenderly, and watched over her in the days of sickness and pain which followed ?

After that I did not see her again until the night of a brilliant party, when she came down, before the guests began to arrive, to look at the rooms. She was more delicate than when I had last seen her, and the color went and came, with a feverish flush, on her cheek ; but she looked very lovely in a

rich dress of snowy satin, draped with lace, a white, half-blown rose nestling in her hair.

The rooms were brilliantly lighted, and green-house and conservatory had yielded up their treasures to wreath the lamps and fill the vases.

Like a spirit of joy she floated around, arranging and rearranging the flowers, while Hugh stood watching her graceful movements.

"Don't weary yourself, Annie," he said; "for I expect you to do me honor to-night."

He spoke lightly; but his words touched a musical chord within the wife's heart, and in her love for him for a while she forgot her wonted shyness.

With graceful courtesy she welcomed her guests; but when the rooms were filled, and she missed Hugh from her side, she grew flushed and nervous; and then, just as the bride's beauty dimmed, Ruth Chivis, in her wondrous loveliness, swept up that sumptuous drawing-room with queenly bearing, and stood in vivid contrast beside her confused and weary-looking rival.

There was a strange, wild gleam in the dark eyes of Hugh Rutlidge when his glance rested upon her, and he listened to her light words. But, if she marked it, she heeded it not; and no lingering glance or saddened smile spoke to him of the past. As the evening wore on, the group around her increased, and with the crowd's adulation the crimson deepened on her cheek, and beaming glance and brilliant repartee were lavished alike on all.

After a while, a gentleman led her to me, arranged the music assiduously, and she sang an air from an opera. When it was ended, one asked for some old ballad. She took up "Auld Robin Gray," and glanced towards Hugh Rutlidge. He bent down, and whispered, "Not that,—do not sing it." His cheek was flushed, his voice tremulous, and I could perceive that her own heart was throbbing fast, under all her hauteur of manner. She took up the music which he had

put aside, and sang it quietly through ; but she looked no more towards him.

When the guests had all departed, he sent Annie up to her chamber, promising not to remain long ; and then he sat down, burying his face in his hands. For a long time he sat there. I heard him murmur " Ruth ! " and then he started up, as though afraid of his own thoughts, and went out into the hall.

I could hear his step as he passed on towards the dining-room ; then there was a sound as though a glass was set heavily down, and in a few minutes he passed the door with flushed cheek and firmer step ; and I knew that in the wine-cup he sought oblivion.

After that night Ruth never came there more. I heard her occasionally spoken of by visitors, as still admired and much sought after. Once Hugh was present when a wealthy suitor of the lady was spoken of ; and he turned his glance from the speaker towards his wife, and I trembled for her, it was so full of bitterness.

The winter, the spring, passed away, and Annie Rutledge was rarely happy as she had been in the few weeks succeeding her marriage, but looked lonely and dispirited. Hugh had long ago given up listening to her morning songs, and when she sang to me her songs were always sad ones.

Late in the spring her physician ordered change of air and scene, for she was evidently drooping ; and Hugh took her first to the country, then to the sea-side. But it was the ailment of the heart, not the body, that was stealing the light from her eye, the color from her cheek ; and balm for the sickness of the heart there was none.

In the early autumn they returned. Again she came to me to while away the morning hours ; but her voice was mournful, her eyes often dim with tears. Hugh was then rarely petulant or unkind to her. He left her much alone, and she had no near friend to be with her, cheering her lone-

liness ; but that she could have borne, had his tongue forgotten not its tenderness, his lip its smile of love. By day he was silent and abstracted, and his nights were spent in reckless gayety.

Wealth he had now ; but he found he had sacrificed his happiness for its attainment ; and the same selfishness which had made that costly sacrifice to Moloch caused him to turn remorseless from his victim.

One morning in the autumn, a cold and cheerless morning, when the rain fell fast, and the wind blew heavily without, Hugh Rutledge lay sleeping on a couch before the drawing-room fire, and his wife, with a book in her hand, sat by his side ; but she had not turned a leaf for a long time, for she was tracing, not the lines therein, but those which were graven by restless dissipation on the handsome lineaments before her. His sleep was broken and disturbed. She would have awakened him if she had dared, but she only ventured to press her lips to the hand on her knee. Suddenly it clasped her own tightly, so tightly it almost crushed the slender fingers in its grasp ; but it was not mere bodily pain that caused her to cry out, in low, anguished tones ; it was the murmured words on the sleeper's lip.

" Do not look coldly, Ruth ! I never loved Annie ! Come to me, Ruth, darling ! " fell, in broken accents, on her ear.

She put her hands up feebly, as though she would shut out that bitter revelation ; but it had passed through the listener's ear down to her heart. A strange pallor settled upon her cheek, her head drooped lower and lower, until it sank upon his bosom, and, with its weight, he awoke.

At first, he looked appalled upon those death-like features ; but, when he saw that she had but fainted, he lifted her in his arms, and carried her up stairs. Then there were hurried footsteps, eager voices, in the chamber above. Not until towards sunset did the bustle subside into profound stillness, and I knew that she was very ill ; but I could learn nothing

more, until, just as the shadows of the coming night began to gather about me, Hugh staggered in, and threw himself down upon the couch where she had fainted in the morning. The door opening into the hall was ajar, and with his heavy sighs there mingled the faint, wailing cry of an infant. Once or twice it came, and I knew that a child was born to him, — that it was its feeble voice which I heard ; but not until the succeeding day did I learn that the sweet voice which had so often mingled its tones with mine was forever hushed, — that the mother was dead !

Servants came to darken the rooms, and then the dead was brought in. Many came to look upon the fair white face, and all spoke wonderingly of the angelic smile thereon. There were whispered words of sympathy for the bereaved husband, and the little one above ; and they laid fragrant flowers on the brow of the early-called, mourning for her who in life's spring-time had died. I alone knew that it was the Father of Mercy who had taken his smitten child to his arms, when she shuddered and grew cold in the wintry blast of despair sweeping over her spirit ; and I grieved alone for the child who was never to know a mother's love.

Early on the morning of the day on which Annie Rutledge was to be buried, Hugh stood beside the lifeless form, looking down upon the ruin which he had made, with the brand of Cain on his soul. The beautiful face of Ruth, which had so long haunted him, faded as he glanced down on the rigid features before him. The memory of his lost wife, as she lay there with her little, shadowy hands folded calmly over the fragrant flowers on her bosom, clung to him by day and by night : it would not pass away ; neither could he rid himself of the icy thrill that struck to his heart when, with a pang of bitter remorse, he pressed his lips to the still one's before him.

Days, weeks of mourning, followed the death of Annie Rutledge. Then there was the stir of departure, leave-takings, and gentle charges to old Mrs. Rutledge, who had come

to watch over the little motherless one, to take fond care of his child ; and Hugh Rutlidge went abroad, an altered man.

The presence of death had startled him from the reckless dissipation into which he had plunged. The shadow which lay dark on his home, where all but for him had perchance been beauty and sunshine yet, — the memory of the wife whom he had lured from happiness to sorrow, — touched his better nature, and roused him, for a season, to a less selfish existence.

Nearly a year subsequent to Hugh's departure, one day Ruth Chivis sat before me, waiting the presence of his mother.

Time also had wrought changes in her. She had lost something of the pride of other days ; there was more of womanly tenderness in the softened light of her dark eyes ; but even as I looked they grew dim with the gathering tears, and I knew thought was busied with buried hours.

When she had last been in that beautiful drawing-room, the fair young wife had been also present in her unshadowed beauty. She would fain have forced back the gathering tears ; but with each passing thought they came faster and faster, until she bowed her face within her hands, and sobbed aloud.

Just then a sweet baby laugh fell upon her ear, the joyous crowing of the child above ; and she dried her tears, listening eagerly to hear it repeated. A moment, and again it came, close at hand, as its grandmother entered with the child on her arm. Ruth was a favorite with the old lady, and she had brought her pet down for her to see, unconscious of the degree of emotion the appearance of that child awoke in the woman's agitated spirit.

With a countenance expressive of the deepest tenderness she looked upon the child. Perhaps the dark, full ringlets which fell about that beautiful face attracted its attention ; for it stretched forth its hands with a gleeful laugh

towards her. She took it in her arms, and covered its little face with her kisses.

And all the while Ruth sat talking with Mrs. Rutlidge the baby looked earnestly up into her face, with its great dark eyes, so like those of its dead mother that a strange awe stole over her heart.

After that day she came very often, and the child was always either brought to her in the drawing-room or Ruth went up to the nursery; where I could hear her clear laugh mingling with that of the child, who had learned to clap its tiny hands, in infantile joy, on her appearance.

But at length her visits were brought to an abrupt termination. Hugh Rutlidge was expected home. He came; change of scene had driven the cloud from his brow, gloom from his heart.

He did not go up stairs to the nursery at once to see his child, as most fathers would have done, but ordered her, when he had taken his tea, brought down to him in the drawing-room.

With her wavering, uncertain step, the little fairy came tottering in, pleased with the lighted room. He looked upon her loveliness with something of a father's pride, and would have taken her on his knee; but his strange face and hasty movement frightened the child. She struggled for freedom, and cried aloud: he strove to pacify her, but she only sobbed; and he put her down angrily, and, as fast as her baby steps could carry her, she sought the side of her nurse, and laid her flushed cheek against her apron, looking round towards him with a sad, questioning expression.

There was something in his child's look that thrilled the soul of the man. It seemed to him as though the spirit of his dead wife was looking out upon him from those eyes, upbraiding him for his neglect of herself and child; and, with a slight shudder, he went out. After that the little one gradually lost her fear of him; but he rarely noticed her.

He had been home little more than a year, when there was a great stir in the house. Upholsterers came to look at the rooms, and one day I was ordered to give place to a new comer. They removed me to a fairy-like boudoir on the second floor. By the fresh lustre of the silken curtains, I knew that it had been recently fitted up, and it was not long before I became aware that it was for the reception of Hugh Rutledge's second bride.

At last she came, with a mingled expression of joy and sadness on her charming face; and I knew she who had been Ruth Chivis had become the wife of Hugh Rutledge — that she had taken the place of the dead.

For a time I was vexed with her that she could have thus lightly overlooked his former neglect of herself, and forgive him the suffering he had caused. But when I saw how deep was that woman's affection, outliving change and desertion, — and, more than all else, when I beheld her devoted to the motherless girl, as though in her tenderness for her she would atone to the dead for the place she had usurped, — I ceased to entertain bitterness towards her.

Years passed; a boy was given them, and they called him Harry. He was a child of glorious promise, whom the father made his idol, to the exclusion of his eldest born; but Ruth, loving him with all a mother's ineffable tenderness, never forgot her who grew up to girlhood fair as a poet's dream, gentle as her own dead mother, lavishing the whole wealth of her young affections on her beloved Harry and his mother, yearning, but never venturing, to offer the like to Hugh himself. Perhaps it was the memory of the injured mother, which her presence ever conjured up, that hushed all tender words for her child to silence on his lip; or, a feeling of strange bitterness, engendered by the knowledge that Annie was heiress, in her mother's right, to the great wealth which she had brought him, to the exclusion of Harry.

Was not the inheritance of his mother's beauty and loyal heart sufficient for the boy? What craved he more than the genius that flashed from the boy's eyes, the high and noble soul within his breast?

However it may have been, all Ruth's endeavors, all Annie's duteousness, could not win from him those tokens of affection which she was learning to long after more and more each day of her life.

The last year of Harry's collegiate life had passed; he had graduated with distinction. But the father's exceeding pride in his son was shadowed by tidings of wildness and dissipation, and Harry Rutledge came home with sunken cheek and worn look. Hugh's heart yearned towards him as it had not yearned even in the days of his innocence; but he dreaded the rash, impulsive disposition of the boy, — he feared lest words of tenderness might lull him to easy forgetfulness of his errors when again tempted. So he veiled his affection under a cold, stern demeanor, which should awe him into obedience; and the boy shrank from the presence he had loved. There came over him an embarrassment, when in his father's presence, which the latter mistook for conscious guilt; and the man's pride was touched. Shame and bitterness took the place of old tenderness. He grew colder and sterner each day. Even his wife could not win him from his reserve; and with growing alarm she anticipated the result. At last it broke upon her, more agonizing in its consummation than her wildest fears had shadowed forth.

Chilled by his father's coldness, in despair at the sadness depicted on his mother's countenance, again Harry Rutledge rushed into dissipation, more dangerous from its recklessness and secrecy; and again it was discovered by his father. There was a bitter, disgraceful scene between the two. The boy defied his authority, and left his home in madness; while Hugh forbade all mention of him in his presence — deaf to

the mother's prayer for indulgence for her child, mute to the love pleading in his own breast for the unhappy exile.

It was nearly a fortnight after his departure, when, one evening, after Mr. Rutlidge had gone out, and the grief-stricken mother lay ill in her chamber, Annie sat alone in the little boudoir, by my side. She had grown into girlhood, very like her mother, only there was something more of resolution in the full, dark eyes, and a latent power lurked about the mouth, as though opportunity was alone needed to call into action a firmness that neither iron will nor fierce passion could shake. But that night she was weeping, for the thought of the banished one lay heavy at her heart.

As she sat there the door opened, and Harry himself came in. He looked cautiously about him, and, closing the door, secured it as noiselessly as he had entered, and stood gazing upon the tearful girl before him.

His eyes were wild and sunken, his cheek very pale, but for the feverish glow burning thereon. He lifted the cap drawn low over his forehead, whispering "Annie," at last, in a voice very low, as though fearful of being overheard. The girl sprang up.

"Has he gone, Annie?"

"Yes, Harry," she answered, sadly, but softly, comprehending at once whom he feared to meet.

Then the boy — for he was but a boy, notwithstanding all that weight of misery pressing so heavily upon him — sank down upon a chair, faint and weak.

"Are you hungry, Harry?" asked Annie.

"Yes, starving!" and his face grew dark with the spirit's bitterness, — "but I will die here before you, Annie, ere I taste a morsel of his!"

"Hush!" she whispered, earnestly, laying her hand on his lip to silence him. "O, hush, Harry, my brother!"

"Don't call me brother, Annie!" he answered, hoarsely; "you will be glad to forget that, when you know all."

But she did call him brother, and every other fond name in the vocabulary of affection; and he laid his head upon her knee, and wept hot, scalding tears of anguish. O, it was beautiful to hear her then plead with him to cast out the angry spirit from his heart, — to hear her beseech him to ask humbly for that forgiveness which she knew would be given to him sorrowing and contrite!

“Never, Annie, never!” he said, at last, starting up. “I have but little time to be with you, for I have only come to bid you good-by before I leave you; I could not go forever away without seeing you, Annie. I shall be off when the sun rises — I must, darling; but, O, never” — and he pointed to the door leading to his mother’s chamber — “let her curse or forget her child, whatever he may do!”

“Would you break her heart, Harry Rutledge? By all her love for you, her only son, I beseech you not to leave us!” And she wound her arms tightly around him, to detain him.

Then he bent down, whispering that within her ear that blanched her cheek; and she staggered back and stood looking at him, as though wondering that he, her brother, could be thus sinful, while he stood before her, his lashes drooping low over his burning cheeks, bowed down with shame. Then the expression on her face changed, for something within whispered her that he was more sinned against than sinning.

“Do not despair, Harry,” she began, in a firm, low voice. But she was interrupted by a sudden agonized gesture from him; and “O, God! my mother! I thought I should be spared this!” came, in deep, despairing tones, from his lip, as his eye fell upon the figure of his mother, standing on the threshold of her chamber, with cheeks white as the lace of the cap which shaded them.

“My boy! my child! Harry!” she said, in a sweet, mournful voice, putting her arm tenderly about him, “it is I who should have been spared this doubt. Have you no

confidence in your mother's love? It is very deep and strong, my child; how entire you may judge when you hear me. Harry, I have loved your father from my extreme youth, even before he met the mother of our dear Annie; but he neglected, forsook me for her; and when she died, and his early love for me returned, I was grateful to him for even that. My child, since the day he married me, neither lip nor glance has addressed me but in tenderest affection; and, realizing all this, and loving him as tenderly as ever, for your sake I am going to leave him, if together you cannot live in peace and happiness,—for he can do better without me than you can. I gave you life; I will not give you up to temptation. Wherever you go, there also will I go to cheer you, to keep you from sin. God knows that my love for him knows no change; but I will be with you, my child, in your hour of peril.”

The mother's voice never once wavered, but there was a divine light in her eye, illuming her whole countenance; and never, in her most brilliant hour, did she look so lovely as when she stood there before them. But the expression of the son's face changed not with those words of love. The drops of agony gathered fast upon his brow; his breath was thick and gasping; but when he comprehended her he raised himself erect, and a flash of pride became visible, humbled as he was.

“Do you think, my mother,” he asked, in a voice sweet and mournful as her own, “that I will permit you to do this for me? But you cannot! Annie! Annie!” he said, turning entreatingly towards her, “won't you take her away?—I have so little strength, I ought not to have come here,—it was very weak and foolish, and heartless and selfish,” he added, as he saw their tears.

“If you can get it to-night, will it save you, Harry?” asked Annie, with tearful eyes and earnest countenance.

“Don't mock me, Annie! Not of him, not of him!”

"Will it do," she repeated, steadily, "if I can give it to you?"

He looked at her first incredulous, then wistfully, while a gleam of hope shot across his wan face.

"You shall have it all, every cent of it, Harry; and then — I will trust what you will do then, my own brother!" she said, with a warm, fond smile. "Go, rest with our mother, now; I will come to you by and by, and, after all, we will be happy once more." And together mother and son passed on to the chamber beyond, and Annie sat down to think of the task before her.

How was she, who never asked favor of her father, to soften his obdurate heart, when even his wife had pleaded with him in vain — she, the unloved, neglected one? But something within her encouraged her to persevere; and, at last, when she heard his step on the stairs, she arose, and, opening the door, looked out into the hall.

When he saw her standing there, he paused, and she asked him to come in, as she wished to speak with him. With a look of surprise, he entered, and sat down in a chair directly opposite to his daughter.

For a moment she stood as though gathering courage to address him. He glanced towards her impatiently, and she went up to him, saying, "I want to speak to you, father, about Harry."

"I forbid you, Annie Rutledge, now and forever!" he answered, rising angrily, as if to depart.

But she laid her hand upon his arm to detain him, telling him that even his command must not prevent her; for he would blame her hereafter still more than he did then, if she did not disobey him.

And then she told him that which caused him to sink down again upon his seat, cover his face with his hands, and groan aloud. She put her arms about him. He shook her off, but

she would not be repulsed. She clung to him, and kissed his cold cheek, and murmured words of endearment in his ear.

And after a while he grew calm, but it was the deadly calm of despair. He drew her to his knee, and, looking steadily in her face, said, "I have never loved you, Annie, as I have loved him : why should you plead for him ?"

"Because," answered the girl, "notwithstanding all this, I love you, my father, too well to see you thus laying up bitter anguish for yourself hereafter ; and again, because it is a terrible thing to behold our loved and gifted Harry ruined, when there is one who can rescue a spirit shaken by the temptations of life, and who will not stretch forth a hand to save him ; and more than all else, my father, because there is a Father whose will is more omnipotent with me than even thine ; and He strengthens me in this hour of trial, else my spirit were weary, my heart faint with the weight of woe laying so heavily upon it. This is the first boon in life I ever asked of you ; and I ask this, father, because Harry knew not what he did when he forged that note. See, I can speak of it now without a shudder, for it was the light in which I first viewed it which filled my soul with anguish. Now I feel that in his great want and temptation he knew no more what he did, than you, father, when you sent him forth on the great sea of human life, in despair and grief, with none to guide him aright. And if he, your child, has come to the verge of destruction, dearest father, in God's eyes are you not in a measure responsible ? If you can rescue him now, and avail yourself not of the power, then God help you !"

She stood before him calm, sublime, in her unwavering adherence to what she believed to be her duty ; and all the while he sat looking at her, wondering to hear one usually so timid and quiet thus boldly eloquent. It was strange to behold the daughter of the dead wife pleading thus for the child of Ruth.

It was not the paltry sum for which she asked that he resisted ; for he would have given the world's wealth, had it been in his power, to have wiped away the blot upon his son's name ; but it was the bitter sense of injury received, that had taken the place of the old tenderness, which made him callous, hard to yield.

But he dared not refuse. He gave her that for which she pleaded ; and in her great haste she paused not to thank him, but passed on to the chamber beyond.

There was the murmur of low, eager voices ; then they were hushed. The door opened, but Hugh Rutledge did not look up ; his face was buried within his hands, and he felt strangely desolate. Those whom he loved, wife and son, had dared not come, — only she whom he had hitherto shunned.

But with the opening door Harry stood before him. His face was white, but firm ; not a muscle quivered.

"I have come to beseech you to lift from my soul the curse which has burdened it since we parted ; to thank you for the bounty which has concealed from the world my shame, and take forever from your presence a son who has dishonored the life which he owes to you," he said, in a voice which was very painful to listen to, in its unnatural calmness. And, as he spoke, Hugh Rutledge raised his head, and looked upon him.

It was a sorrowful, broken-hearted glance, and the boy trembled fearfully beneath it.

"Pardon, O, pardon me, father !" came, in a hoarse whisper, from his lips.

"God bless, God forgive you freely, Harry, as I do !" answered Hugh, in accents as hoarse and tremulous as his own, as he bent over him who knelt a suppliant now at his feet.

With a faint whisper of joy, the beautiful face turned towards him, as he sank slowly back upon the soft carpet, while

the bright flowers thereon grew dark with the life-current flowing from the white lips of Harry Rutlidge.

There were long hours of doubt and anguish; then there settled down on all hearts the deep, silent grief, born of death. The boy died with a calm smile on his lip, — peace filling his weary heart.

And Hugh Rutlidge was now indeed a changed man. Smitten in his most cherished hopes, softened, subdued, by grief, he recognized the infinite mercy of Heaven, when his idol was stricken, and the neglected one stood by his side ministering to his peace, and pouring balm into his own heart and the bleeding heart of Ruth; for to her who, in the beautiful language of the Scriptures, had cast her bread upon the waters, had it returned. She could not be childless, though her own child was dead, while Annie Rutlidge remained.

UNSPOKEN VOWS.

“BELOVED, all make vows,” he said, —

“I offer none to thee, though now,
Thus pillowing this drooping head,
Their breath would fall upon thy brow.

“Beloved, let our after years

Prove all sweet promises unmade,
Perfecting through eternal spheres ; —
Trust me, mine own, be not afraid.”

With a rich flush of rosy light

Deep thrilling over brow and cheek,
The gentle rapture of delight,
“Beloved,” she said, “all words are weak !”

Those “after years” have come to her.

Are their bright promises fulfilled,
Does the same breath those tresses stir,
And is that tender bloom unchilled?

Answer, O hearts that have relied

On love too pure for earthly thrall ; —
From erring passion purified,
She walks in silence with ye all.

THREADS DRAWN FROM LIFE:

AN AUTOBIOGRAPHY.

CHAPTER I.

“ From the strong will, and the endeavor
That forever
Wrestles with the tides of fate ;
From the wreck of hopes far scattered,
Tempest-shattered,
Floating waste and desolate.”

SEATED alone, one day in early spring, in a silent, shadowy room, while, one by one, came down great drops of rain, with a faint sob, to kiss the window-panes, — the fire burning bright within the grate, a parted fold of the curtain alone revealing, with the murmur of the petulant wind, the presence without of the unquiet spirit of the storm, — I yielded my thoughts, through the long hours of that destiny-marked day, to the half-brilliant, half-shadowed dreams of girlhood ; dreams which were filling my soul with that vague longing after affection — that delicious belief, and proud consciousness of the power within, to weave into the woof of life the one thread so gorgeous, so durable, that is woven through the heart-strings of all womankind.

From the period when, a mere child-student, in the quietude of a school-room, forgetful of the labor, the weariness of its translation, I lingered over the love of Paul and Virginia, — its power and pathos thrilling my heart, for the first time,

into a girlish perception of that after-knowledge, at once so simple and so profound to every pure and elevated soul — that heavenly beatitude, blessed are the beloved ; — since then ever have I dreamed — ah ! and still I dream — dream, with the last ray of earthly hope quenched by the overflow of that fountain of grief which fills with the upspringing in the soul eternal of trial and suffering. This spring of bitter waters is not born in the blessed peace of childhood ; it rises in the great strife of human life, to empty its turbulent waves into that of death.

But life to me, then, had no autumnal clouds ; faint shadows alone had flitted over the horizon, subduing, but never veiling, the bright sunshine. Once, when a little cherub brother, who had nestled in his flight from heaven a while upon our mother's bosom, sank into a serene, breathless slumber, I remember weeping bitterly, and stealing from my own bed, in the hush of dawning day, to kneel by his little white-spread cradle, that I might wake him, as oftentimes before, with a loving kiss ; but those lips which had dimpled ever before beneath my own remained still, like cold, pale rose-leaves, folded forever ; and then came my poor, sorrow-stricken mother, to press me to her heart, and win me from my wild grief, by the knowledge of the home to which God had taken our wanderer.

And, once again, there were days of sorrowing, but not as when death entered our home circle ; for now it was a loss which had nothing of the subduing, purifying influence of death. It raised into life a demon which was to pursue us with more or less pertinacity, — which at first veiled its hydra-head beneath the mantle of dignity, but in after life revealed itself, with its iron sway, its subtle poison ; and each heart ached, in the finale, which had taken Pride, as its buckler against the world, to its bosom.

Our father, our free, generous, lavish father, was a ruined merchant, bankrupt in fortunes ; but he bore it like a brave man in the world's eye, and struggled on for the children who

had been dearer in affluence than his own heart's blood, and who grew yet dearer in adversity. A less spacious, a less luxurious home, was taken ; but still comfort, refinement, even much of elegance, remained. But now the paternal eye, in its intense care, grew more watchful of our outward appearance. The diminished attentions of society, marked not by us still thoughtless children, instigated our parents to an ambition for us with which they had never wearied themselves in the independence of by-gone affluence.

No longer were we suffered to go bounding through the hall, with the wild buoyancy of happiness, to our father's arms, when he joined his family in the evening time ; he would subdue the flying step with stately rebuke, silence into more well-bred modulations the merry, ringing laugh ; and, though a deeper love might have lain in his heart, and moistened his glance, we beheld only the changed manner, the sterner rule, and withdrew from him ever more and more, until distance, and something akin to fear, lay in the place of the gushing love of impulsive childhood.

Ada, our eldest sister, with all her father's pride joined to a woman's beauty and sensitiveness, had made her *début* in society, the daughter of a rich man. Well I remember standing by her side the night my mother, with assiduous care, robed her for her first appearance ; and wondering, in my childish enthusiasm, if there would be any other so fair as our young Ada in her rich attire,—so very lovely in her gayety.

Days and weeks went by, and from my mother's words I knew dear Ada won much admiration in the brilliant circle in which she moved. Bouquets of choice exotics, with delicate perfumed notes, were sent her, and stylish-looking men came frequently to our house ; but Ada remained as of old, until, after a while, she grew brighter, more joyous ; and then I overheard my mother's maid tell our old nurse, in a whisper, " that Miss Ada Aubrey would soon be Mrs. Courtland."

Then came our father's reverse of fortune, and a sudden paling of Ada's red cheek; days in which only my mother saw her eldest child, and Mr. Courtland's name was no longer mentioned.

I could not then comprehend the sudden change in Ada's whole being; for even physically she had changed. She looked taller, from her more erect bearing, the prouder carriage of her head; but she was cold and reserved, at times irritable, and most unhappy in the seclusion of home.

So passed the winter; but in the spring there was also another change. Ada was to be married—married to one twice her years. Young as I then was, I knew there was little affection in that brilliant bridal; the beautiful dark eyes, which flashed a lightning-like glance, from beneath the costly bridal veil, upon the gay friends grouped around her, the millionaire's bride, spoke the bitterness of her heart.

Mr. Richard Rutland took his wife, my sister Ada, to his distant home; and the parting with her kindred, which would once have wrung with acute pain a loving heart, passed very calmly, but for one wild, convulsive sob, when a mother's kiss sank upon those quivering lips.

It was a long time before I visited her; and during the brief time that I was there I was painfully oppressed by the frigid elegance of all that surrounded her. It was a fine old aristocratic residence, and Mr. Rutland was evidently proud of the fair mistress who filled his house with company, and with her high-bred manner added *éclat* to his wealth. Perchance, though unconsciously, his heart, in the secrecy of that gorgeous home, might have pined for that tenderness which came not with the flower which he had gathered to his bosom; he might have yearned for that tenderness which was forever dead—which had been thrown back, a scorned treasure, upon the pure, fresh heart of youth.

Ada's heart had frozen; no love-beam could warm it. The fairest statue gleaming from its niche in her magnificent

drawing-room was neither fairer or colder ; but every bosom has its own secrets, and, like his wife's, Richard Rutland's heart was a close-sealed volume.

Our father gloried in the proud position of his eldest child ; he had no cause to deem her a miserable sacrifice to a base, mercenary spirit, to her own unhappy pride. But, ah ! a mother's eye is powerful to penetrate the calm exterior, to fathom the tearless eye, and mark the spirit's inward rain falling in ice-drops upon the aching heart. She alone knew the fury of the storm which had desolated her child's life, and sent her forth with all the sweet, blissful words of womanly tenderness an unspoken language by her.

All this I gathered with the lapse of years, and a more intimate knowledge of life,—that life which I, too, was advancing upon, serene, trusting, as Ada had been before me. But I was not like my elder sister ; nature had fashioned us but little like unto each other. I could not subdue myself, let come what might, as she had done. God created me a creature of impulse. The firmness of Ada had perchance changed my destiny.

But I wander from that revery in the early spring, with that longing after conceived but unrealized affection which was ever haunting me,—which, more than once, allured by some meteor, I had rejoiced in, but to reject with disappointment. I arose, and paced to and fro, restlessly, the apartment. The reflection of a vision in the mirror riveted my glance. It was that of a young girl, not beautiful ; a simple dark cashmere robed the slender figure, and a band of snow-white lace encircled the throat. There was no glow of beauty on the pale cheek, no Grecian-cut features ; but around the slightly parted lips lay a soft, trustful expression. They quivered with emotion, as when an earnest heart thrills to the melody of life ; and something of intellect looked out from the pale, calm brow, banded by soft brown hair.

For a moment or more self gazed upon its reflection, and I

fancied, standing close beside me, a colossal figure, a noble head, bending downward. Girlhood paints full oft such pleasing pictures, and desire bids the vision which hope has sketched whisper softly to the more youthful spirit. It bore the semblance of one only once beheld, then personally unknown.

It was Destiny which called to memory, that idle hour, the remembrance of Laurie Oakland. Destiny, seemingly the caprice of a wayward girl, which led me to the little escurtoire, standing close at hand, and seated me there, penning, to the music of the falling rain, a half-truthful, half-visionary letter; a letter which should win one of whom I had often heard to bestow a passing thought, perchance a response, to the gratification of a girlish whim; and with a false signature it was forwarded to Laurie Oakland, of Oakwood.

The novel fancy of this person, several years older than myself, who had withdrawn from the brilliant society of a gay life, and singled out a sunny nook in the quietude of the country for his residence, had won much upon my imagination in connection with a vague, mysterious report of hours of misery through which his soul had passed; and, while training roses over his garden lattices, and winning the oak's gigantic boughs to shade the trellises of his quiet house, it was rumored that, even in the purity and serenity of such an existence, he was not free from life's trials — trials very terrible to bear.

A desire to commune with this spirit struggling heroically beneath life's burden was mine; — to be to his suffering heart what, in the hopefulness of an unsubdued spirit, I believed that I might be, a cheerer of its loneliness. I wished that, shrouded in the incognita which enveloped me, — free to give voice to my thoughts unembarrassed, in my concealment, by the conventional rules of life, — I might be to him a spirit-love, ready to console in affliction and soothe in sorrow.

The belief in the actual of a love like this, ever debarred

from earthly passion, was easy for a young, impassioned spirit; and when the chord which, with hopeful fingers, I had essayed to touch in the heart of the stranger, gave forth a responsive note, I yielded my entire imagination to the fascination of that dream of romance, and for a while we corresponded as we had commenced.

But Laurie Oakland's heart had outgrown the romance of youth. A love which was thus ideal could not suffice him; he desired the actual, which he fancied would be more precious than the ideal. The heart of manhood could not be satisfied with a love so ethereal, pure, beautiful as it was, — coming, unfearing, like a birdling, to his heart, there evermore to pour its sweet song of joy upon the ear. He grew importunate that I should reveal myself to him. He was not content to know me but in spirit; he was like other men, and could not divest himself of the mere physical senses, and dwell in aspirations for a higher and more elevated life. My dream, so childlike in its hopefulness, was at an end; I sorrowed over the awakening; but, in the union of thought, which had so long been ours, his mind had exerted something like a magnetic influence upon mine. For the first time there now arose in my heart a yearning, an intense yearning, after that beauty hitherto uncared for.

“I would that I were a beautiful woman! but, alas! I am not,” I repeated to myself again and again, as he grew ever more importunate.

That which I had hitherto offered him was beautiful as the stars, pure as the angels in heaven. I had weeded carefully the garden of my heart, and culled for his acceptance only the purest and fairest flowers. He knew nothing of the mortal infirmities, the waste spots, as it were, of my heart. All that was fair and pure had been separated from the more earthly part of my nature. O! it was a glorious offering which I laid upon the altar of faith, built up in the overflowing trust of a young heart, for that man!

While I hesitated and trembled lest the revelation of myself should disappoint him too bitterly, I ceased to remember that the very infirmities revealed of his nature, as our knowledge of mutual secrets increased, had but served to deepen into tenderness and sympathy my own feelings towards him. But the will of a resolute man is not an easy thing to be evaded.

The incognita which I had believed to be so impenetrable he had well-nigh fathomed.

Laurie Oakland was on the eve of a knowledge which I would fain have never revealed to him. A sudden womanly diffidence had swept over me, with the manifest danger, and burnt in a fever of humiliation on my cheek.

I lingered over my task; I was loth to pen the words which should unloose the shrouding veil between us. I glanced upon the imploring words, the ardent entreaties, traced by that beloved hand; I gazed upon the painted lineaments of his noble countenance, which he had sent me; and I obeyed him.

It had a strange power, that simple, truthful miniature; for the expression would ever vary as the light fell upon it, standing in its little half-opened frame. To me there were moments when it seemed to smile upon me so tenderly, that through my whole being its influence was diffused like radiant sunshine. And when, in the shade, a cloud lay upon the brow, a blended expression of reproach and irony looked forth from the deep-blue eyes, then life grew dark—my spirit troubled.

A ray of sunlight gilded it, one bright May morning, as it lay before me, while I answered a letter that hour received.

“Dearest Laurie! Most beautifully and truthfully has Longfellow embodied, in exquisite verse, the emotion which we all, I believe, experience more or less,—an emotion which has stolen over my soul, this radiant spring morning :

‘ A feeling of sadness and longing,
That is not akin to pain,
And resembles sorrow only
As the mist resembles rain.’

“ ‘ Wherefore art thou sad, O my soul ? ’ question I ; and echo answers, ‘ Wherefore ? ’ Why am I sad, O my friend ? Ask thine own spirit, and a voice shall answer you, ‘ Even because the fairy castle which I built lavishly out of the rich material of young faith and hope was founded upon the quick-sands of time — ay, time ! — and the glorious edifice, whose fair proportions and pure architecture I gloried in, lies shattered and low in the dust, the dust of hope. But, lo ! even out of chaos rises a star burning with a light intense, yet serene, in the horizon of life. Thou, Laurie, wilt thou not also recognize this beacon-light ? ’

“ Over this *shadow*, which you have given me, of yourself, I have thrown my handkerchief ; but the bland, fragrant morning breeze, stealing through the open casement, lifts a fold ; and may I tell you that there is more of sunshine falling from those gazing eyes of your own upon me than from the cloudless sky above ? O, why will you seek to dispel the delightful illusion which we have, I believe, so mutually enjoyed ?

“ Through your less painfully sensitive brain of manhood can there gleam no light which may reveal to you the pain with which a feminine heart must shrink from a confession of this nature ? Consider — be merciful, and spare me !

“ Confidently trusting you will grant this prayer, I would that the only painful thought to me in connection with you should be banished.

“ With the sunrise this morning, alone, on horseback, I was cantering over the open road, where the pale pink leaves of the apple-blossoms floated down with every breath of the bland spring air, to kiss the dark-green sward beneath. Everything seemed fresh, buoyant with exuberant life ; and

the glad song of the robin sang sweeter than ever before on my ear.

“Why, O Laurie, is it that a deeper power manifests itself in every living thing? Is it because a deeper pulse beats at my heart, that all things become luminous and bright?—bright even while this undefinable sadness lurks at my heart,—a sadness which I would not part with, mingled, made up, as it is, of sweetness and woe,—prophetic, as it is, in momentary despondency of the future. But, ah! am I not selfish to a degree which will make me seem very pitiable and weak to you, in thus dwelling on the passing mournfulness of my own restless heart? How can I impart consolation and strength to you, should misfortune on your part call upon me for sympathy, if thus I show myself void of that serenity, that holy faith in the all-wise Power directing the destiny of our lives?

“O, my friend! it occurs to me that I am very perverse in spirit, to strike out from the broad, even pathway of life, which others travel in contentment, to seek thus to trace one bright little rivulet which has captivated my fancy!

“Laurie, I am drawn on by a secret desire to enlist your sympathies,—to reveal to you that of which I have not yet spoken, of which I should not, had not the relation between us become more material. Through the ambition of others, I have been partially led into an engagement with one for whom I entertain little or no affection; but who, alas! loves me with an intensity which no coldness, petulance or waywardness, on my part, can diminish. He offers me a luxurious home,—to contribute every blessing that wealth can purchase, to add to my happiness; but, uncongenial in spirit, utterly dissimilar in feeling, how can I accept that which he proffers me? I have ever endeavored to teach him that his affection is unwelcome to me; but, in his weakness, he recoils from the knowledge; and I—O! I could not love one without that noble pride, that glorious hauteur of spirit, which would die rather than lay open thus his secret woe to every careless eye.

“ But the margin of this last sheet is covered. Adieu, my friend, and yield to my wishes, that still, as now, I may remain your
CARA.”

After this letter was sent, I awaited with much anxiety its answer, which was, for a time, through a trivial accident, deferred. In the interval a gradual realization of my feelings dawned upon me ; with sudden courage I roused myself to a serious firmness in regard to him of whom I had written to Laurie Oakland, and William Courtney withdrew himself from my presence.

Indulged, petted child as I had hitherto been, nothing saved me from the censure of my friends, but the attention which I was rapidly attracting by the productions of my pen ; and for her who was, by her individual exertions, winning herself a prominent position, an alliance even such as I had refused became of less consequence.

Ah ! little they dreamed of the cause, undefined even to myself, from which sprang up such bright, fair thoughts, emptying themselves, in a vein of joyous eloquence, throughout all that I wrote, whether it sparkled diamond-like in flowing verse, or burnt in impassioned prose. But when grave, learned men smiled benignantly, when men of letters condescended to pen words of encouragement to the young aspirant for literary honors, when burning poetry was dedicated to her, bouquets of choice flowers sent her, then she grew very hopeful, with the thrill of gratified ambition.

How brilliant life seemed opening to me ! Not a cloud was visible on the horizon, and prosperity settled down, for once, like a spell of purity, on a human heart. I grew not arrogant with success ; I was never more humble, less self-reliant, than in those chance, bright hours of happiness. Gratitude lay like dew upon my heart, and trembled upward on every prayer to the throne of the Eternal.

Ah ! sunshine prepares us not for clouds — joy, for sorrow.

We repine, the past seems so much brighter as it recedes ; it is a terrible trial, — it requires a mine of stern moral courage to look upon the future rolling in clouds of darkness and gloom.

CHAPTER II.

“ I wake ! Away that dream — away !
Too long did it remain ;
So long that, both by night and day,
It ever comes again.”

The moonlight flooded with silver the lucid waters of Lake George, and, stealing through the blushing foliage of the frost-kissed sycamores, played over the fairy-like villa rising amid a wilderness of garden shrubbery beyond. Soft and slow came the clear chime of a bell in the distance, mingling with the gentle rippling of the waters and the rustling of the leaves.

An impassioned worshipper of the beautiful, the loveliness of that hour would have sufficed to have impressed itself upon my memory, as, a short distance withdrawn from a gay group, I stood gazing upon the surrounding scenery.

But a figure coming slowly down the village street arrested my attention. Nearer and yet nearer it drew, pausing before the garden-gate a moment ; and, as it stood with raised hat, the bright moonlight revealed the original of the *shadow* in its little case reposing beneath the folds of the cashmere folded about me.

Then the deep-toned, musical voice, heard hitherto but in dreams, and Laurie Oakland and I had met — met as strangers meet !

What was the past ? A mere *dream*, an idle whim, a sportive creation of Fancy, amusing the ennui of life. In the actual may we ever realize the glowing ideal ? “ Never ! ” answers the cold, calm voice of Reason. Laurie Oakland

was, after all, but a mere man of the world, utterly divested of those hero-like attributes with which I had invested him. But not then—not on that bland, glorious autumn night, when my spirit yielded itself to the intoxicating beauty of all things about me—could I realize this.

O, perverse yet wondrous heart of womanhood! making idols but to find them clay, and to worship still, beautiful even in thy weakness! Had I met Laurie Oakland in society, he would have possessed no power by which to attract me; but when I looked upon the home which he had wrought out of what must have been an innate element of creative beauty, as by his side I stood, one soft, moonlight night, within the grounds circling Oakwood, the moon's rays stealing down through the oak-boughs, and rippling into a carpet of dark leaves and delicate silver tracery the ground beneath us, my fancy became captive, and imagination was ever busied in framing apologies for his worldliness, or absolutely denying credence to that which was by rumor attributed to him.

Rumor was indeed busy with his name; and, in a half-whisper, I was soon made the reciprocant of a dark, sorrowful story, in which he had part. A doom was hanging over his life; an hereditary curse, which had fallen on nearly all of his name, was told to me by officious friends; and, with the threatened evil of insanity, Laurie Oakland possessed a powerful hold upon my sympathies.

Whether there was any substantial foundation for this story I never knew; but the threatened danger never occurred to him, and the sorrowful expression which dimmed at times the light of those deep-blue eyes thrilled the love dawning in my bosom into ineffable tenderness.

O, the affection which, in the guilelessness and fervor of youth, I lavished on that man,—which, forgetful of every worldly advantage, turned to him, the sorrow-laden, to cheer and gladden! How, ah! how was it repaid?

But I would not yet speak of it; only of the sunshine

which preceded the storm. Day by day they return to me, in their happiness, those numbered hours of joy ; even the long, still Sabbath morning, when we rambled into the primeval woods, where on the oak's gigantic trunk he carved letters which were to outlast his fickle faith, or gathered the maple's crimson leaves, to mingle with the sycamore's golden foliage, and lie together, for the winter's bouquet, in some quaint, ponderous volume of by-gone days.

With the spell with which he enchained me, I forgot the world, and the world ceased to remember me. Ambition slumbered ; for I remembered the poet's words, —

“ What I most prize in woman
Is her affection, not her intellect :
The intellect is finite ; but the affections
Are infinite.”

And Laurie Oakland knew me but as a simple, trusting girl, — a devoted, loving woman ; and he turned from me, who had but affection to offer for his acceptance, to a golden star which was wooing him in the distance. Still the same calm smile, still the serene, quiet manner, remained ; and not the faintest revelation of my bosom's secret revealed to him my regret.

The genius which other and greater men had acknowledged and sought to foster, the not unnatural pride of one who had received the adulation which had been proffered me, were alike forgotten. Day after day went by, and hope after hope faded silently, as the drooping leaves upon the trees.

Winter's first snow-storm came, and lay like a shroud over the dead beauty of autumn ; and the last day which I was to spend by the waters of Lake George was at hand. Sunday preceded it, — a cold, gray, winter day.

Laurie Oakland had been absent for some time ; it was rumored that his marriage-day had been fixed. But that Sunday morning he entered the old gray church, where we

had worshipped together in the earlier days of our acquaintance. He glided quietly up the aisle (for he professed a reverence for all things sacred), seating himself just before me; and I was ignorant of his presence in the sanctuary, until, joining in the Litany, the deep, musical voice murmured, clear and audibly, "O God, the Father of Heaven, have mercy upon us miserable sinners!" I looked up, and the steady gaze of those sad blue eyes met my own with an expression of strange tenderness. Even now I tremble as I recall the emotion of that moment,—the degree of idolatrous worship offered by me there, in the very sanctuary of Him who forbade the creation of idols. Like some wild and deadly monsoon it swept in desolation over my spirit; and then, with the solemn tones of the rector's voice, "O holy, blessed, and glorious Trinity, have mercy upon us miserable sinners!" falling upon my ear, like an oasis in the desert, sprang up the sweet prayer of supplication for pardon, "Spare us, good Lord!" and I no longer glanced towards Laurie Oakland.

The heiress was his betrothed bride; yet love such as should alone have been given to her lay in the glance and lurked in the tones which addressed me in coldness and reserve. But a secret joy, a proud exultation, in the power with which I controlled all manifestation of my own unhappiness, filled my soul, and strengthened me in the hour of parting, when, with the iron clang of the steamer's bell, her prow cleft the waves, and the master of Oakwood, on his bridal morning, stood out upon a balcony, waving his hat in silent adieu, as, shooting beneath the cliff below, we passed from his sight. And there, beneath those fairy-like turrets, all snow-crowned and glittering in the morning sun, with that false heart remained the shattered fragments of what had once been faith, and hope, and tenderness.

CHAPTER III.

“The star of the unconquered will,
He rises in my breast ;
Serene, and resolute, and still,
And calm, and self-possessed.”

Down the shadowy aisles of the past floated three years,— years fraught not with the buoyant merriment of earlier days, but years that had looked upon the weary student of life battling with that subtle lesson whose intricacies destiny led her to master. O, a difficult task is it to turn from the fabulous tale of hope and joy, all brilliant and glowing, to the passionless lore of duty ; but it is consoling, in the end, when the good battle is fought, and virtue is the victor, to

“Know how sublime a thing it is
To suffer and be strong.”

Three years had passed, and Christmas eve had come, — a clear, cold, winter night. The chime of the clock in the hall announcing the hour of midnight, I suffered the pen which had been gliding for more than an hour rapidly over my paper to rest, and, rising, crossed to the window, and looked out. A light, soft snow had fallen, covering the frozen earth, loading the boughs of the trees ; and the clouds, rolling back from the moon, suffered her chaste light to illuminate the scene. I was very weary ; for, during the evening, much had occurred to agitate me. The day which had been for some time anticipated had that night been fixed upon, — my wedding-day ; and he who was to share with me its solemnity had not been long gone. Still the echo of his voice, so richly modulated, which had thanked me, in deep emotion, for the boon which I had granted him, lingered on my ear ; still, in remembrance, I beheld the noble form which had sat beside me, — the mature, brilliant man, who had expressed with

such earnest eloquence his regard for me, — the man whom I at length revered and loved. Involuntarily my glance wandered to the mirror, and, with a sudden impulse, I went forward and gazed therein.

The tall, slight figure held itself more erect than of old ; the lip had lost something of its girlish gayety, and no longer quivered with every passing thought. A line, not of passionless pride, but calm resolve, was visible ; the cheek was paler, thinner, than in other years.

That countenance was a faithful index of my own heart, — resolute, calm and self-sustained, proud of the strength of spirit which had subdued the restless longing after the unattainable. But, as I gazed, once more memory called up the graceful figure of one exiled by duty from remembrance ; and I turned to the window to bow my cheek to the cold panes, while tear after tear ran down the frost-wreathed glass ; — not tears of bitterness or pain, only a silent melting away of the quiet sorrow of my soul. Long they rained, and quietly. Then I folded the curtain, and gazed about me ; and something there was of exultation and pride thrilling through my entire being, as I looked upon the beautiful edition of a recent collection of my writings, which had that day been sent to me from the publishers ; and I folded up the volume to the address of Laurie Oakland.

Long were the reveries which were mine that winter night ! Void of all enthusiasm was the emotion with which I became the bride of Reynell Chivers, but pure and blessed was the consummation of that tie. He knew the secret of my younger romance. No traitor was I to steal into his bosom. He knew that the fire which had been lighted for another had gone out forever. And even the strong, powerful man, with his brilliant intellect and rock-like strength of character, sorrow and disappointment had not spared. His boyhood's dreams were dispersed. He offered me not young manhood's glowing love. It was but a tribute which the mature scholar paid to the

young aspirant's success when Reynell Chivers first offered me his homage ; and as such I understood and accepted it.

On New Year's eve we were married. Surrounded by congratulating friends, kneeling at God's altar, one moment memory, truant-like, wandered from the accepted one beside me ; there was a longer, deeper respiration, a slight throbbing pain at my heart, and it passed forever. Not to the vow then warm upon my lips was I false ; not, in after hours, in the momentary void and loneliness of a brilliant life ; not, though every struggle had snapt a chord within my heart in twain ; not, for all life holds dearest and fairest, false even in thought to my marriage vow.

Ada's destiny was not mine. God, in his infinite mercy, had averted it ; my heart had strengthened, not frozen, in trial. If the love which I gave Reynell Chivers possessed not the impassioned fervor, the almost idolatrous worship, which had been lavished in early girlhood, it was serene and unchanging, founded on principle. It cheered him when he grew weary with the strife of living ; it sympathized with him in his aspirations after the noble and the beautiful ; it rejoiced with him in their attainment ; and last, but not least, when sickness and death followed close upon our bridal year, it fell like soft sunshine on his fading life, and, in unfaltering tenderness, went down with him to the peace and quietude of the grave.

In the interval Laurie Oakland had lived, it was said, unhappily ; gold bore little happiness to Oakwood. There was nothing of congeniality between his heart and the young bride of his choice. The indulged child of affluence, who had known no will but her own, could not tame her wayward fancies to his perchance too exacting will ; she could not put from her thoughts gayety when his brow clouded, and pour down into the depths of his aching heart the balm of devoted, self-sacrificing love.

A mere household automaton, she soon lost herself in the

petty duties of domestic life, unable to arouse herself to enthusiasm—to awake to that love and appreciation of the beautiful which would have rendered her companionable to him. Alas! that any one should be blind to the wondrous loveliness of nature—deaf to the glorious harmony of creation! Annie Oakland, the wife of the master of Oakwood, was like a tuneless instrument, giving forth, under the hand which would fain have awoke one responsive note, no tone of music.

But he had no right to repine; of his own free accord had he listened to the syren voice of ambition, and turned a deaf ear to love's pleadings. What though his life was a void and barren thing? He had wrought his own destiny; he had chosen to be the worldling's slave.

Not even when his higher nature recoiled,—even when the heart, which had for a time slumbered, awoke and called aloud in its cravings for that blessed, adorable, all-enduring thing, woman's love,—could he avert the fate which he had brought upon himself.

Perchance, had he sought more diligently after the good in his wife's character, had he been less impatient, more persevering, some latent fire within that young bosom would have developed itself—some fair bud might have sprung up, oasis-like, in the barren waste, which careful culture and gentle guidance might have won into a beautiful and fragrant blossom. But Laurie Oakland possessed not the strength requisite, and the distance grew between them.

No soft fluttering of scarf or handkerchief from the terrace of Oakwood, on his return home, ever spoke of a fond watcher by his fireside; no graceful form bounded down the avenue with eager readiness to greet the wanderer's return, or on the low seat nestled to his side, with earnest glance, as he read from the grand old masters, or “lent to the rhyme of the poet the music of his voice.”

It was in one of those hours in which the full reality of his

desolation impressed itself upon him, when his heart was hot and restless, the future lone, and his fainting spirit seemed heavier than he could bear, that the presentation copy of my poems, which, without a word, I had forwarded to him, was received. Listlessly he withdrew the envelope, and opened the richly-embossed cover, glancing at its contents. Something there was like half-forgotten tones stealing to his memory, as line after line was scanned. One by one glided the hours uncounted by, and his cheek glowed, his lip quivered. A tear falling upon the snow-white page aroused him, and he laid it gently aside, while tear after tear rolled down his cheek, and was crushed disdainfully beneath his hand.

Back wandered memory through the dim and spectral corridors of time, — back to the moonlit autumn, — and “Cara ” broke, in one low, thrilling tone, upon the silence.

Years passed on — years almost of forgetfulness. Then Annie Oakland slept the dreamless sleep ; and the widowed husband, and I, the bereaved wife, met — met far from the scenes of our earlier acquaintance — met as strangers meet, but for the questioning glance of those earnest eyes, whose light grief had dimmed.

And I, world-weary, sorrow-laden, with the grace of youth forever gone, still might have awakened the tenderer reminiscences of other years, and consecrated to him the residue of my life. But he whose truth had never wavered, from whom death had alone separated me, arose reverently in my memory between us, and Laurie Oakland and the wife of Reynell Chivers parted forever !

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